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**Master's Thesis of International Studies**

**Korean Identity  
Maintenance/Reinforcement of First-  
Generation Korean Language Teachers in  
the US**

**이민 1 세대 재미 한국어 교사들의  
정체성 유지 및 강화**

**August 2019**

**서울대학교 국제대학원  
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Korean Identity Maintenance/Reinforcement  
of First-Generation Korean Language  
Teachers in the US

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**August 2019**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explored the identity formation of first-generation Korean language teachers in the United States, particularly in the workplace. Also, drawing from the immigrant replenishment hypothesis embedded within the literature on assimilation, this study examined how consistent interaction with co-ethnics and ethnic culture in the workplace helped to maintain or reinforce ethnic identity. Furthermore, concepts such as social and ethnic identity as well as ethnic pride were considered in helping to explain the impact of the Korean teaching environment. To achieve this goal, I interviewed 20 participants, ten of whom were Korean language teachers and ten of whom were “non-teachers.” All twenty interviewees worked for the Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey, California and all shared their invaluable experiences of working at DLI and how the DLI teaching or non-teaching work setting influenced their ethnic identity or sense of Koreanness.

Findings from the ten teacher interviews showed that the Korean teaching work environment actually did help many of the teachers maintain or reinforce their Koreanness. The primary reasons for this reinforcement was due to the fact that the Korean teachers spent the majority of their workday speaking in Korean, interacting with fellow Korean teacher colleagues, and keeping up with Korean news and pop culture in order to share those materials with their students. In addition, a sense of pride in sharing Korean authentic materials with non-Korean students helped in positively reinforcing Korean identity.

Results of the ten non-teachers showed that the non-teaching workplace setting helped non-teachers become more Americanized or in tune with American work and cultural values. In light of social and ethnic identity, nine of the ten non-teachers who began their DLI careers in teaching positions also expressed feeling more Korean or patriotic towards Korea while teaching as opposed to in their current positions. Furthermore, the non-teacher interviews also revealed that some of those who switched from teaching to non-teaching positions switched to their non-teaching positions due to a desire to get out of the “Korean bubble” that the teaching environment created; this aligns well with the social and ethnic identity theories discussed.

Overall, my findings suggest that many aspects of the teaching environment align with the ethnic enclaves or communities created by immigrant replenishment and that working in non-teaching positions led to greater Americanization in the workplace. Contemporary Korean culture and language were also generally seen as positive, instilling a sense of ethnic pride in the participants which helped to maintain their Korean identity. Finally, while some participants felt the need to get out of the Korean bubble, all participants still seemed to have some level of attachment to their Korean ethnic identity, it was rather their attachment to Korean society and culture that diminished.

**Keywords: Ethnic identity; Koreanness; immigrant replenishment; Korean language teaching; ethnic pride**

**Student ID: 2017-22508**

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## **I. Introduction**

Over the past several decades immigration patterns to the United States have transformed drastically. Once coming to the US in waves and settling in clusters in major cities, immigrants to the United States are now in constant flux, settling all throughout the nation and being represented through generations of immigrant offspring (Waters & Jimenez, 2005). As a result, immigrant experiences, too, have become ever more complex and unique, constructing and reconstructing their ethnic and social identities in various ways.

With this diversity of immigrants, comes a multitude of ways by which they adjust to their new lives in the United States. Several immigrants became more “Americanized” over time, gradually adopting the language and mannerisms of their American host culture neighbors. Yet, the current literature on assimilation and ethnic identity tends to skim over the fact that contemporary immigrants come from a plethora of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, have distinct appearances, bring stronger heritage values and beliefs, are more transnational, and that the US mainstream is constantly changing as a result.

The three prominent assimilation theories, namely classical assimilation, segmented assimilation, and new assimilation all have gaps when it comes to the current wave of immigrants. Classical assimilation focused primarily on Caucasian immigrants, those able to easily blend into US mainstream culture and pass as “all American,” making it difficult to apply the theory to Asian immigrants or other non-White immigrants to the US (Cho, 2012). Segmented assimilation theory, while more compelling as it does shift the focus to minorities and suggests multiple

assimilation (or non-assimilation) paths, still largely limits its focus to the second-generation with an emphasis on socioeconomic mobility. New assimilation theory as posited by Alba & Nee (1997) does acknowledge a changing US mainstream, but still concludes, like classical assimilation, that immigrants will eventually assimilate into the host society. Considering the limitations of current theories on assimilation, but recognizing the changing mainstream proposed by new assimilation theorists, Jimenez (2008) has put forward his hypothesis on immigrant replenishment. This idea suggests that the constant influx of immigrants into ethnic enclaves or communities has allowed co-ethnics to interact, reinforcing ethnic identity (Jimenez, 2008).

Through in-person interviews with 20 Defense Language Institute (DLI) Korean employees, this research aims to add to the literature on immigrant replenishment by exploring how ethnic workplaces may act as sources of immigrant replenishment, allowing employees to further reinforce or maintain their identities. In particular, this paper focuses on first-generation Korean language teachers and how teaching the Korean language, culture, and frequently interacting with fellow Korean language teachers helps them to maintain a sense of Koreanness. In addition, the concept of ethnic pride, or pride in certain ethnic cultural elements, will be assessed to understand if this too helps to reinforce Korean identity in the workplace. As immigrant replenishment has primarily been studied through Mexican immigrants, my research will ideally not only expand the literature on immigrant replenishment, but also open further discussions around the concept of immigrant replenishment in Asian immigrant and Asian-American

communities in general, and Korean immigrant and Korean-American communities in particular.

## II. Study Background

Korean immigrants in particular have shown significant and unique patterns of adjustment to US society. The first wave of Korean immigrants, who arrived in the modern-day US from 1903 to 1905 to work on pineapple fields in Hawaii, were already considered bilingual and bicultural by the 1920s (Min, 2011; Cho, 2012). However, these early Korean immigrants soon became not only field workers, but also the catalysts for anti-Japanese aggression toward Korea when Korea was made a protectorate of Japan in 1906 (Min, 2011). Thus, until 1924 when the National Origins Act was passed, completely halting immigration from Asia, early Korean immigrants arrived in the US to not only pursue a better life, but also uphold the Korean values and culture that were being suppressed by Japan (Min, 2011; Cho, 2012).

The second wave of Korean immigrants arrived in the US between 1950 and 1964, in the midst of the Cold War and just as US-Korean relations were normalizing and consisted primarily of the Korean wives of US servicemen, Korean orphans, and Korean international students (Min, 2011). Thanks to the enactment of a small quota for Asian immigrants in 1952 and the opportunity for Asian immigrants to become US citizens, this second wave of immigrants fled abroad in vast numbers and quickly assimilated into the US mainstream, losing touch with their ethnic Korean identity (Min, 2011).

Finally, when Asians were given an equal chance of immigrating to the United States as Europeans were, under the Immigration Act of 1965, Korean immigrants arrived in exceedingly large numbers. Many of these Korean immigrants came from high socioeconomic backgrounds, were typically professionals in their fields, and were “white-collar college educated people” (Hong, 1996, p.5). However, most first-generation Korean immigrants, including those white-collar professionals, tended to retreat to blue-collar small business and intensive labor jobs in the United States due to their lack of English skills (Hong, 1996). In addition, this post-1965 group of Korean immigrants, like the first two waves, moved to the United States due to stresses on the Korean Peninsula. For this group in particular, it was the political instability, lack of democratic freedom, and academic and job competition that pushed them toward the United States (Min, 2011).

The consolidation of Korean identity and the suppression of Korean culture, first under Japanese occupation, then during the division of the Korean Peninsula during the Cold War, and finally under the authoritarian developmental state governments in South Korea became major underlying factors for immigrating to the United States. By starting a new life in the United States, these immigrants hoped that Korean cultural identity, or rather “Koreanness,” could be preserved in a more positive way.

For the purpose of this paper, the term “Koreanness” is interchangeable with “ethnic identity.” Schubert (2011) describes Koreanness as “racial and cultural characteristics,” which could therefore encompass both racial and ethnic identity (p. 7). In addition, based upon the way my interview participants used the

term Koreanness, Koreanness here encompasses the South Korean (hereafter Korean) homeland cultural experiences, traditions, language, beliefs, and even ancestry that shaped the formative years of my interviewees.

### III. Literature Review

In order to understand the complexity of Korean immigrant identity formation or ethnic identity maintenance, it is important to first and foremost define identity and the processes that shape identity. In this section, I will explore social and ethnic identity in particular, and then discuss three major assimilation theories, namely classical assimilation, segmented assimilation, and new assimilation, and how the concept of identity relates to these processes. Finally, this section will discuss literature that expands on new assimilation theory and how the contemporary wave of immigrants to the United States, in general, and Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, in particular, have allowed for ethnic identity “refreshing” among Korean immigrants and transnationals.

#### 1. Social and Ethnic Identity

To assess the role that work environments play in ethnic identity formation or maintenance among first-generation Korean language teachers in the United States, it is essential to understand what identity actually means. In particular, this section will explore social identity, followed by its subcategory of ethnic identity, to better understand the overall process of ethnic identity formation as it relates to my research.

## 1-1. Social Identity

Social identity taps into the social and psychological dimensions of an individual and can generally be defined as “aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging” (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Based on social identity theory, people tend to conceptualize the social groups to which themselves and others are, or can be, members. In addition, individuals can belong to multiple social groups based on such characteristics as religious affiliation, political preferences, age, gender, nationality, and ethnicity (Cho, 2012). While some social identifications may be constant throughout one’s life, such as race or gender, many others are constantly in flux, and individuals tend to shape their behavior and interactions based upon those social groups to which they want to belong (Balich & Mukha, 2014).

Once individuals consider themselves to be members of particular social groups, they then tend to take on positive perceptions of their “in-groups” while negatively judging the relative “out-groups” that they do not identify with (Cho, 2012). However, this does not necessarily mean hating on the out-group, but rather subjectively focusing on the “not-so-great” characteristics of the out-group which make the in-group seem to be a better choice for alignment. In fact, if they feel unsatisfied with their identification to certain groups, individuals may choose to “leave” the group in pursuit of identification with another group that is more “positively distinct,” allowing them to, in turn, more positively increase their self-perception and esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

Because social identity is theorized as being based off of “in-group” and “out-group” juxtapositions, individuals in their respective in-groups tend to feel a sense of belonging to and protection by those groups (Balich & Mukha, 2014). This then leads to self-identity based upon group identity. For example, a woman may belong to the groups “Korean” and “teacher,” leading her to think, “I am Korean; I am a teacher.” With this in mind, many studies have shown social identification with various groups to partially “answer the question, ‘who am I?’” (Cho, 2012, p. 34).

## 1-2. Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is essentially a subcategory of social identity and is, simply put, “the ethnic component of social identity” (Cho, 2012, p. 29). To broaden the definition, ethnic identity can be understood as one’s psychological attachment to his or her ethnic group and can even influence choices such as which friends to associate with and whom to marry (Trimble & Dickson, 2010). Moreover, Iwamoto and Liu (2010) describe ethnic identity as “reflective of cultural practices as well as the acquisition and maintenance of cultural characteristics.” While racial identity and ethnic identity are often interchanged, racial identity is actually based upon how racism and social attitudes about one’s race influence self-conceptualization, whereas ethnic identity is considered as far more multidimensional and shaped by cultural affiliations, which can change circumstantially and over time (Iwamoto and Liu, 2010).

Interestingly, ethnic identity is often a conditional construct because, without the concept of ingroups and outgroups and the distinctions between them, ethnic identity would be meaningless; So, for instance, in South Korea, where the population is highly homogenous, ethnic identity means little to nothing. Yet, when Koreans immigrate abroad, their juxtaposition to other ethnic groups makes ethnic identity significant (Cho, 2012). In fact, as Koreans are considered one of the most homogenous ethnic groups with a strong set of “Asian values,” Korean immigrants to the US tend to better maintain ethnic solidarity and ethnic identity (Cho, 2012; Yu, 2017). However, aside from homogeneity, the mere fact that that Asian immigrants in general have more distinct physical features than European immigrants can also help to explain why preserving ethnic identity is more common among Asian immigrants in the United States; outgroups simply don’t see them as fitting the standard “American” prototype and, therefore, *assimilation* into mainstream Caucasian-American society can be more difficult (Cho, 2012).

## 2. Assimilation Theories

To better gauge the identity formation and/or maintenance of Korean immigrants to the United States, and, in particular, first-generation Korean language teachers in the US, it is essential to understand the major theories of assimilation and how those theories explain the intertwining of assimilation and ethnic identity. Thus, in this section, I will outline classical assimilation theory, segmented assimilation theory, and new assimilation to show how assimilation can

shape ethnic identity or a sense of “Koreanness” among Korean immigrants in the United States.

## 2-1. Classical Assimilation Theory

The classical assimilation model was first developed around the 1920s and posited that assimilation was the ultimate end goal for all immigrants resettling in the United States (Akiyama, 2008). As such, assimilation was considered to be the “process of social disorganization, adjustment, and eventual Americanization,” slowly dissolving heritage culture affiliations (Akiyama, 2008, p. 253). This process of Americanization was described as irreversible and one-way, meaning that becoming less “American” was not possible and that the minority group always adopted the culture of the host or dominant group in order to enter the middle-class majority (Cho, 2012). Thus, the degree to which an immigrant assimilated into US middle class society essentially became a measure of how successful that individual could be in the host culture (Greenman & Xie, 2006). In addition, classical assimilation theory suggests that assimilation is a continual process that occurs over generations, with the first-generation being characterized as still relatively distinct from the host culture, the second-generation being a little less so, and the proceeding generations engaging in intermarriage, effectively eliminating a single ethnic identifier (Akiyama, 2008). Also, in this regard, the length of stay in the US and number of generations in the US is positively correlated with assimilation (Cho, 2012).

Despite the appeal that classical assimilation theory may have had in describing early immigrants to the United States, it quickly became a contested concept upon the arrival of the post-1965 wave of immigrants. This new wave of immigrants was comprised of far greater ethnic diversity, challenging the foundations of classical assimilation theory formulated around immigrants from predominantly European countries (Cho, 2012). According to the classical assimilation model, non-European immigrants and those that lived in rural areas with less interaction with the mainstream American middle class were said to assimilate at a slower rate than those concentrated in urban centers and with European descent. In addition, classical assimilation scholars also claimed that levels of attachment to ethnic identity, and the markers that come with it such as language, religion, and cultural values, can also help in predicting how assimilated immigrants are (Cho, 2012). Nonetheless, classical assimilation theorists argue that eventually all immigrants alike will assimilate into the host society (Cho, 2012). It was this focus on early European immigrants and on the claim that ethnic identity attachment can predict levels of assimilation that raised skepticism about the applicability of the classical assimilation model on post-1965 immigrants and ultimately led to an “updated” theory of assimilation.

## 2-2. Segmented Assimilation Theory

Unlike the classical assimilation model, the segmented assimilation model, which emerged in the 1990s and focused on the post-1965 wave of immigration, suggests that assimilation does not need to follow a single linear process and that

immigrants can still assimilate while retaining certain cultural markers such as language and values (Akiyama, 2008; Waters et. al, 2011). In addition, whereas classical assimilation emphasized assimilation into the American middle class, most post-1965 immigrants, especially from Asia, were already of white-collar professional status with middle class salaries (Cho, 2012). Therefore, for segmented assimilation theorists, assimilating into the American middle class is only one of several ways to become integrated into US society.

Aside from giving up origin culture ties and assimilating into the middle class, immigrants may oppositely choose to reject the host culture and retain origin culture values and affiliations; Often, those who follow this path remain in ethnic enclaves in the host society such as Koreatown in Los Angeles where English is hardly needed to make a decent, although often not as great, living. Furthermore, some immigrants may choose to maintain a balance between both their origin culture and their host culture by continuing to follow certain cultural practices while also adopting aspects of the host society (Cho, 2012).

Although segmented assimilation theory primarily focused on the assimilation of second-generation immigrants, the general theoretical basis of segmented assimilation can be applied to first-generation immigrants as well. Overall, the key takeaways from segmented assimilation theory are that 1) there are various avenues through which assimilation can occur; 2) that assimilation occurs through the intersection of contextual factors (for example, socioeconomic status, area of residency, race, and family background) and individual-level factors (for instance, English proficiency and length of time in the US); and 3) that maintaining certain heritage culture elements may be beneficial (Zhou, 1997). In this regard

then, segmented assimilation shines a light on the fact that one's culture of origin and ethnic identity can be a strength and source of esteem-boosting rather than of esteem-lowering and assimilation hindrance.

### 2-3. New Assimilation Theory

Building onto the assimilation discussion, Alba & Nee (1997) began to redefine assimilation once more and settled on the idea of assimilation as a blurring of ethnic distinctions and cultural practices, as well as eventual acceptance of various ethnic groups by the "mainstream," which is continually changing. In fact, according to the new assimilation theory, the mainstream is shaped by all groups in interaction with one another, and because immigration has occurred at much larger rates than in the past, ethnic communities in the US are expected to only increase and be evermore influential in shaping American society (Esser, 2010; Cho, 2012). Like the segmented assimilation theory, the new assimilation theory challenges the classical one-way assimilation process into the White middle-class. However, like classical assimilation, the new assimilation model posits that eventually assimilation into the host culture - the new mainstream amalgam of various ethnic groups - will be the outcome (Esser, 2010).

Although this theory also has loopholes, the main assumption of new assimilation theory is that incentives are an important driving force in determining how much immigrants are willing to assimilate. In other words, "immigrants [tend to] adjust to make adequate changes according to the opportunities given to them, then move upward" (Cho, 2012). So, for example, if a Korean immigrant realizes

that high English proficiency expands her job opportunities in the US, she may feel more compelled to assimilate by adopting the host culture's language and mannerisms. In addition, because of the blurring of ethnic distinctions postulated by new assimilation theory, intermarriage with Caucasians is another important way in which immigrants may choose to assimilate, again placing immigrants on the path toward assimilation into the host culture (Cho, 2012).

### 3. "Refreshing" Identity

As the three major assimilation theories have shown, there are several possible reasons why immigrants may choose to assimilate into the host culture. Nevertheless, aside from those who choose to reject the host culture as outlined in the segmented assimilation theory, the outcome for most immigrants across all three theories seems to be eventual assimilation into the mainstream culture by either rejecting the origin culture, balancing the two cultures, or simply blurring into the host culture through interaction and intermarriage. With these assimilation theories in mind, I will now introduce newer discussions that suggests ways in which contemporary immigrants have possibly strengthened their ethnic identity and ethnic or heritage cultural values and practices.

#### 3-1. Maintaining Ethnic Identity through Ethnic Culture Interaction

Studies on immigrant replenishment are a more recent development to the scope of studies on assimilation and ethnic identity and develop on the new assimilation approach that the mainstream is constantly changing, and that ever-

greater immigration is diversifying the US mainstream even more. Essentially, immigrant replenishment pertains to “the extent to which immigration from a particular sending country is replenished” (Waters & Jimenez, 2005, p.119). In his research on Mexican-Americans, Jimenez (2005) found a link between immigrant replenishment and ethnic identity. To elaborate, Jimenez noticed that, through past successive generations of Mexican-Americans, cultural markers such as customs, language, and traits were weakening due to the ideology that Americanization had been more socially accepted, a concept outlined by classical assimilation (Waters & Jimenez, 2005). Yet, when Mexican immigrants were replenished through contemporary increased immigration, new Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans came into greater contact, restoring Mexican-Americans’ exposure to ethnic cultural traditions and language and subsequently “refreshing” ethnic identity (Jimenez, 2008).

In reference to Waters and Jimenez (2005), Cho (2012) also suggests that a lack of interaction among co-ethnics would eventually lead to a loss of traits, customs, and language, diminishing ethnic identity. Therefore, consistent interaction among Asians can help to maintain ethnic identity through consistent use of the ethnic language and by being exposed to the values and beliefs of the ethnic group (Cho, 2012). Furthermore, while past assimilation theories largely point to intermarriage with Caucasians as a way to assimilate into the mainstream more quickly, especially among highly educated immigrants, immigrant replenishment has shown that increased immigration has allowed co-ethnics to marry intergenerationally, suggesting that intermarriage with Caucasians is not always contingent with increased assimilation (Cho, 2012). In fact, studies have

shown that Korean intermarriage with Caucasians, in particular, has decreased, perhaps because of an increase in marriage between new Korean immigrants to the US and (multigenerational) Korean-Americans already living in the US (Cho, 2012). Therefore, immigrant replenishment and increased marriage between co-ethnics have not only allowed ethnic cultural traits to be passed on, but also have increased the value of those traits, creating a more positive sense of ethnic identity.

### 3-2. Ethnic Pride, the Korean Wave, and Korean Identity

Ethnic pride is essentially a “cognitive-emotional construct in which a person expresses his or her affiliation with their native ethnic or cultural group, along with high regard for this affiliation (Castro; Stein; & Bentler, 2009, p. 2). In other words, ethnic pride is pride in one’s own ethnic identity or cultural heritage which positively reinforces connection and association with one’s ethnic group. However, generational differences can also influence the level of ethnic pride one has for their ethnic identity or cultural heritage. As my research focuses on the first-generation Korean immigrant group, this section will discuss the ethnic pride of first-generation Korean immigrants and transnationals as it relates to the “Korean Wave,” or *Hallyu*.

When interacting with non-Koreans, Korean transnationals often face conflicting notions of Korea as a nation. Many Americans who have not yet been to Korea still depict Korea in terms of its war past and division, while Korean transnationals understand Korea in a more “updated” sense (Yook; Yum; & Kim, 2014). Today, the Korean Wave has become increasingly more associated with

Korean culture and Koreanness, leading many scholars to wonder what effects the Korean Wave has on Korean ethnic pride among Korean immigrants and transnationals.

The Korean Wave generally originated in the 1980s and 1990s when Korean pop music, then dramas and television shows, became increasingly consumed by Koreans and by neighboring Asian countries (Jang & Sohn, 2013). More recently, Korean pop culture has become a global phenomenon, reaching countries well beyond Asia and allowing Korean-Americans and transnationals to stay connected with their roots. When examining the impact of the Korean wave on the various generations of Korean-Americans and sojourners in the United States, Yook, Yum, and Kim (2014) found that first-generation Korean-Americans and sojourners showed the highest levels of Korean identity affiliation and that first-generation Koreans were slightly more keen on sharing their Korean culture with others compared to succeeding generations. Moreover, Yook, Yum, and Kim (2014) found that “[first-generation Koreans] were more apt to report that Hallyu made them want to associate with their Korean ethnic identity more ...” (p. 18). Therefore, for Koreans with pre-established emotional ties to Korea, positive cultural symbols such as pop culture through the Korean Wave tends to help to reinforce Korean ethnic identity and instill a sense of ethnic pride.

#### IV. Methodology

This study aimed to explore how consistent exposure to the ethnic group and to the ethnic culture helps to shape or maintain ethnic identity. Developments

to studies on assimilation have shown that immigrants may not always give up their ethnic cultural values and beliefs in order to assimilate into the mainstream and that several immigrants have even managed to balance both their new American values with their original ethnic values and beliefs. In addition, Jimenez and Waters (2005) have shown that through consistent interaction with ethnic group members through immigrant replenishment, immigrants from across several generations were able to maintain valuable ethnic traits such as language. More recently, Cho (2012) has shown that even online communities have enabled Korean immigrants and Korean-American women in the US to find Korean ethnic solidarity and maintain a sense of “Koreanness.” Therefore, the purpose of my research is to add to the still limited discussion on how regular interaction with co-ethnics influences ethnic identity and how ethnic work environments such as, in this case, Korean language and culture teaching institutions help language teachers maintain their Korean identity. Specifically, this study focused on answering the question of how first-generation Korean-American Korean language teachers, who are already well-adjusted to US society, have managed to shape or maintain their Korean ethnic identity through the workplace, if at all. With this research question in mind, this chapter discusses the methodological approach, data collection methods and tools, the sample group, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations, and research limitations in unearthing answers.

## 1. Methodological Approach

As seen from current discussions on assimilation and identity, ethnic identity formation is an ongoing process that is very personal and different for each individual even within the same social groups. While the major theories of assimilation show that ethnic identity can be estimated depending upon the assimilation path chosen or the extent to which host cultural assets were adopted, immigrant replenishment, online communities and media exposure, and a wider diversity of immigrants in general have suggested that ethnic identity is a complex construct that cannot be measured concretely. Rather, it is best gauged by understanding the in-depth experiences of individuals in certain ethnic groups. Thus, this study has adopted the qualitative interview method as a well-suited approach to learning about the ways in which first-generation Korean-American Korean language teachers have managed to maintain their Korean ethnic identity through the workplace.

According to Weiss (1995), there are several reasons why qualitative interviews may be the most appropriate approach for certain studies. In particular, Weiss (1995) suggests that the qualitative interview method allows researchers to understand the processes leading to certain events or outcomes through multiple perspectives and interpretations (p. 9, 10). When dealing with such topics as ethnic identity formation and how ethnic identity could potentially be shaped by the workplace environment, everyone has their own unique experiences in the workplace and beyond that influence, or not, how they identify. In this sense, qualitative interviews can help to understand individual experiences, which can later come together to form a larger narrative on the impact of the workplace on ethnic identity.

## 2. Data Collection Techniques

For this study in particular, I decided to implement the in-person semi-structured interview approach, an interview style that follows topic guides or sets of major questions but leaves plenty of room for open-ended responses in order to explore certain topics more in-depth (Health knowledge, 2017). In-person interviews allow the interviewer to observe the feelings and emotions of interviewees in order to understand certain attitudes toward the events or processes being discussed (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2016). As such, the in-person interview approach allows for more personalized responses to major topics and questions as well as a gauge of attitudes through interviewee tones and facial expressions. However, it is also important to note that the in-person approach and semi-structured format also has limitations such as scheduling difficulties and pressure to respond in consideration of the interviewer's "preferences."

### 2-1. Developing Interview Questions

The semi-structured interview approach is often chosen in place of a structured interview approach when "the researcher already has some grasp of what is happening within the sample in relation to the research topic" (Health Knowledge, 2017). Because I had already perceived there to be a possible connection between the Korean teaching environment and teachers' Korean ethnic identities, I felt comfortable leaving room for more open-ended responses and

fewer rigid question in order to understand in what *ways* ethnic identity may be formed through the workplace.

Having decided on the semi-structured approach, I then formed two sets of guides - one for DLI Korean language teachers and one for DLI non-teaching Korean employees. The two guides were quite similar and began with the same basic demographic questions and centered on topics related to cultural affiliations and how various workplace processes may influence ethnic identity, or a sense of Koreanness; yet, there were some slight differences between the two. For instance, in the first guide, which I have called the “Teacher guide,” there is a section of questions that specifically pertains to the teaching environment such as, “How has teaching the Korean language and culture shaped your ethnic identity, if at all?” In addition, “How do you think that working with/around other ethnic Koreans has shaped your identity, if at all?” By asking questions specifically aimed at Korean teachers, I was able to get a sense of how working with other Korean teachers, using multiple cultural materials for lessons, and speaking the Korean language in the classroom and with fellow teachers impacted the teachers’ Korean ethnic identity (see Appendix A for the full “teacher guide”).

The second guide, which I have informally called the “non-teacher guide” to refer to those in non-teaching positions, similarly asks questions specific to the non-teaching work environment. Most of the non-teachers do not work within the Korean school, but rather work in a different department comprised of colleagues of diverse backgrounds. For the non-teacher interviewees, questions such as “In what ways do you think working with colleague of diverse backgrounds has shaped your identity in the workplace?” were asked. In addition, nine of the ten “non-

teachers” actually started working at DLI as teachers, so I also wanted to understand how their identity or sense of Koreanness had changed after transitioning to a non-teaching environment as well as the reason behind their switch to their current positions. As such, I also asked questions such as, “How has Korean teaching at DLI helped shape, maintain, or reinforce your Korean identity as opposed to now?” By asking these questions, I was able to treat my non-teaching group as a comparison group for those in teaching positions and better understand how the teaching environment may be conducive to reinforcing Korean identity or Koreanness (see Appendix B for the full “non-teacher guide”).

## 2-2. Sampling Method

Ideally, for studies such as this one that seek to understand the impact of ethnic work spaces or ethnic communities on ethnic identity, diverse sample groups that explore a range of participant experiences, characteristics, and thoughts may be most ideal. In addition, large sample sizes are usually always the most ideal for capturing trends in a sample group. Yet, ultimately, it is just as much who volunteers to participate in the study that makes the sample group unique and significant.

## 2-3 Sample Selection & Recruitment

Because I wanted to control for immigrant generations, I chose to specifically focus on first-generation Korean immigrants. I found the US first-generation Korean group, in general, to be unique due to the fact that many of them

were of white-collar status but took on blue-collar jobs in the United States due to a lack of English proficiency (Hong, 1996). I knew beforehand that the members of my target population, Korean teachers at DLI, were all required to have attained a certain level of English working proficiency and that almost all had master's and/or PhD degrees from English-speaking countries. The stronger sense of Korean identity inherent in many first-generation Korean immigrants and transnationals in combination with characteristics that would normally set them up for successful assimilation into the US mainstream society intrigued me, leading me to focus on first-generation Korean language teachers in the US and the impact that their ethnic work setting had on ethnic identity or sense of Koreanness.

To achieve the goal set out by this research, I decided to use the snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is described as a “referral approach where a small number of individuals with specific characteristics recruit others with these characteristics from their networks or community” (Valerio, M. et al., 2016). I used the snowball sampling method because I wanted to reach the specific group of first-generation Korean-language teachers as well as non-teachers within DLI, but only had a couple of contacts within the target group. Therefore, of the few contacts I did have, it was easiest to ask them to pass the word onto other potential participants that fit the characteristics I was seeking. In this sense, snowball sampling is good when the researcher has a limited number of contacts within a harder-to-reach target group. However, it is important to note that snowball sampling can also prevent diversity within the participant group (Valerio, M. et al., 2016).

## 2-4. Sample Size

While the sample size for qualitative studies should be large enough to describe the patterns and trends within a group that the researcher is attempting to measure, too large a sample size can also create repetitive and unnecessary data (Shetty, 2018). In the case of in-depth interviews, quality is usually always stressed over quantity and Dworkin (2012) suggests that anywhere between five and 50 interviewees is acceptable. Shetty (2018) recommends that 20 to 30 participants is an appropriate range for in-depth interviews.

For my study, ten teachers and ten non-teachers were selected, creating a sample size of 20 interviewees. After hearing about my study through fellow colleagues, those who volunteered to take part then set up a time and place to sit down for the interview. The interviews typically took place in library meeting rooms or local cafes and were anywhere from 30 minutes to over an hour long. In addition, all 20 of my participants interviewed in English.

## 2-5. Research Site

This study took place in Monterey Bay, California, home to the Presidio of Monterey and the Defense Language Institute (DLI). All 20 of my interviewees worked at DLI, with the ten teachers working in the Korean language building, or the Korean “schoolhouse” as they referred to it. Almost all of the ten non-teachers worked in the Department of Defense building located outside of the Presidio.

In addition, based on some insight from one of my participants, Oh (non-teaching), DLI contains about 2,000 language teachers. She also mentioned that there are about 200 Korean faculty, about 80 percent of whom are Korean language teachers, and that the focus of DLI is to teach foreign language skills for military intelligence. The Korean department is therefore a very unique group of ethnic Koreans residing in the United States and should be studied as such.

### 3. Ethical Considerations

To ensure the privacy and protection of my interviewees, before commencing with the interviews, I made sure to go over the general overview of my study and the general question topics I would be focusing on. Then, I informed all my interviewees that there would be no harm or risks in participating in the study and that the participants were free to opt out of the interview or refuse to answer questions at any time if they felt uncomfortable. I also made sure to ask permission to record the interviews for personnel playback purposes while writing the findings section of my thesis and reassured all interviewees that their privacy would be protected and that their names would be anonymous or replaced with pseudonyms in the study. To see the full form of consent, please see “Appendix C.”

### 4. Methods of Analysis

According to Elliott (2018), coding is “a fundamental aspect of the analytical process and the ways in which researchers break down their data to make

something new” (p. 2850). In other words, coding is essentially the process of breaking down interviews into categories and labels in order to find general patterns and themes, and then to piece together those labels and themes across interviews to paint a picture.

For my interview analysis, I used the commonly used thematic content analysis approach to code my participants’ responses. Rucker (2016) suggests that thematic content analysis is typically as follows:

- Getting familiar with the data (reading and re-reading).
- Coding (labeling) the whole text.
- Searching for themes with broader patterns of meaning.
- Reviewing themes to make sure they fit the data.
- Defining and naming themes.
- The write-up (creating a coherent narrative that includes quotes from the interviewees).

The first step in the thematic content analysis process is to become familiar with the interview data (Rucker, 2016). For this first step, I listened to my recordings multiple times to understand my interviewees’ narratives and responses and took detailed notes throughout. Usually the first step also includes reading interview transcripts, but unfortunately, due to time limitations, I was not able to transcribe my twenty interviews. I then proceeded to code, or label, my notes such as “Koreanness,” “identity outside of the workplace,” and “Americanization” to name a few. Next, I attempted to search for common themes or patterns across my

twenty interviews using the codes or labels that were derived from the proceeding step. I grouped my labels and devised three major themes and then named those themes appropriately. The three themes, which will be further discussed in depth in the interview findings section below, are as follows: (1) Korean identity beyond the workplace and before working at DLI, (2) Korean identity maintenance/reinforcement through Korean language teaching, (3) learning American culture post-teaching or in non-teaching positions. Finally, I analyzed my interviews according to the themes in order to connect interviews and form “a cohesive narrative that includes quotes from the interviewees (Rucker, 2016).

## 5. Limitations

Although I felt that the sample selection and analyzing methods were most appropriate for my research, it is important to mention the limitations of such methods. When creating interview questions, not all questions included will support the analysis section and not all questions needed to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewees will have been formulated in the first place. Thus, it is inevitable that some concepts and patterns will not be articulated in the study. In addition, as aforementioned, snowball sampling can lead to a lack of participant diversity as many of the interviewees are usually connected through pre-established networks. This could further hinder a fuller picture of themes and patterns in the study. Finally, coding can be unreliable, especially when certain labels are ambiguous and are interpreted differently by the participants (Gorden, 1992).

## V. Results and Findings

Through conducting interviews with both DLI Korean teachers as well as non-teaching employees, I was able to better understand how the teaching work environment in particular influenced shaping or maintaining Korean identity. This section outlines the basic demographic backgrounds of the interviewees and discusses the three major themes that evolved during the interview process. The themes are as follows: (1) Korean identity beyond the workplace and before working at DLI, (2) Korean identity maintenance/reinforcement through Korean language teaching, (3) learning American culture post-teaching or in non-teaching positions. Details of the participants' backgrounds are charted at the end of the section (please see page 33).

### 1. The Interviewee Group

For this study, 20 participants sat down for in-person interviews with ten interviewees coming from the Korean teaching department, and ten coming from non-teaching positions. Of the participants, sixteen were female (80%) and four were male (20%), and all twenty participants were between the age of 40 and 59. All interviewees were first-generation Korean Americans, meaning they all came to the United States as adults. Eight of the twenty participants (40%) were married to American non-ethnically-Korean spouses, all eight of whom were female with three coming from teaching positions and five coming from non-teaching positions. The least amount of time spent in the United States was ten years while

the longest time spent in the United States was 29 years. All but two participants earned their master's degrees in the United States, with one having earned a master's degree in New Zealand and one having earned a master's degree in Korea. In addition, while educational backgrounds vary, many of the participants had backgrounds related to their positions at DLI such as linguistics or foreign language teaching. Finally, all interviews were conducted in English throughout February 2019 (see **Table 1** and **Table 2** for more details on the interviewees).

The following sections present the interview findings, organized into the three themes outlined above. In order to maintain the authenticity of the interviewees' thoughts, feelings, and ideas and to supplement discussions around the major themes, I have incorporated direct quotes. I have also used some indirect quotes to more clearly articulate certain responses or to summarize a group of similar responses. Furthermore, in order to keep anonymity, I have replaced the participants' real names with pseudonyms.

## 2. Korean Identity Beyond the Workplace

The first major theme that emerged during the interview analysis was how the participants affiliated with cultures outside of the workplace. In response to questions regarding self-identity, all twenty of the interviewees identified, to some extent, with their Korean ethnic identity, reflecting on how their formative childhood years spent in Korea strongly influenced their sense of "who am I?" For instance, Bae (non-teaching, age 52, lived in the US for approximately 20 years) reminisces:

I miss the smell of Korean cities and walking through Korean alleyways. I'm from Busan, so whenever I go to ocean cities like San Francisco, I feel that I am home. There are also foods like sea squirt that I miss eating, and, as I get older, I feel that my desire for Korean food and nostalgia of Korea have become stronger.

Baek (teaching, age 52, 18 years) similarly agrees that growing up in Korea largely shaped how she identifies, mentioning that, "I have fond childhood memories of Korea, and the events (social movements) that I experienced in Korea have shaped who I am as a Korean."

As with Bae and Baek, spending the entirety of their childhoods in Korea instilled a sense of Korean ethnic identity in the participants that has remained with them despite having lived in the United States for at least a decade. In fact, even among the eight interviewees who had American spouses, five participants felt they still had, or were gradually gaining, a stronger sense of Koreanness. For example, Park (teaching, age 42, 20 years) felt that:

When I first came to America, I thought I was quite Americanized, but after marrying an American, I think I have actually become more Korean. Once I started living with my husband and step-son, I've noticed that there are some Korean values and expectations that I have placed on them. In the classroom too, before I got married, my students used to tell me that I was quite Americanized, but now they tell me that my teaching style is too Korean!

In Bae's case, she already had a strong Korean ethnic identity and even revealed:

I used to get really offended when people told me I was Americanized. I always felt, 'I am Korean.' I didn't like the idea of compromising my Korean identity to become

American. Even my friends were shocked that I married an American. Among all my friends, I think my Korean identity is the strongest, so they thought I was the least likely to marry an American.

Despite having married Americans, both Park and Bae expressed either a gradually strengthening Korean identity after marriage, or an already consistently strong Korean identity. This suggests that marriage with members of the mainstream American society may not always be conducive to becoming more American, less Korean, or both. In addition, Park and Bae's experiences may also insinuate that assimilation is not a one-way path, meaning that it may be possible to move back toward origin culture values, manners, and identity.

When asked about their social groups, all participants had at least one Korean friend with whom they spent time with on a regular basis, whether they be a friend from church or temple, from work, from university, or the like. Furthermore, eleven out of 20 participants spent most of their time with Korean as opposed to non-Korean friends outside of the workplace, while the remaining nine spent time with a mix of Korean friends, US-born second generation Korean-American friends, and non-Korean friends. Of those nine, only three were in teaching positions, while six were in non-teaching positions. This suggests that working with fellow Koreans in the teaching sector may provide more opportunities for teaching position interviewees to spend more time with Korean friends outside of the workplace. In addition, when giving a reason why they felt most comfortable among Korean friends, most of those with primarily Korean social circles felt it was not only because of a shared understanding of growing up in Korea, but also because they felt that their English proficiency, while high, was

not good enough to fluidly understand the cultural jokes and sarcasms that Americans engage in.

However, despite identifying as ethnically Korean to varying extents, eighteen of the 20 participants also expressed discomfort among Koreans in Korea and felt that, compared to Koreans in Korea, which many have called “Korean-Koreans,” their identities were a mix of both Korean and American cultures and values. Noh (teaching, age 40, 10 years) mentioned:

I do not feel completely Korean nor completely American, but I do feel like I fit in with the Korean-American group. I like American music and fusion Korean food, and when I visit Korea, I often realize that I do not agree with some Korean societal values or norms such as hierarchy and sexism anymore.

On a stronger note, Kwon (non-teaching, age 59, 26 years), while acknowledging her Korean ethnic origins, stated that, “Korea is out of my blood now. Aside from a few friends in Korea, I have no close ties to the Korean nation or culture.”

Although Koh (non-teaching, age 45, 20 years) and Bae (non-teaching, age 52, 20 years) also felt that they had a mix of both Korean and American cultural values, ideas, and behaviors, aside from some new generation Korean trends, they did not feel much discomfort among Koreans in Korea. In fact, Bae mentioned, “Korea feels very homey to me, but when I come back here [to the US], I also feel that I am home.” Bae’s perception of both Korea and the United States as “home” is a sentiment characteristic of many transnationals.

In reviewing the interviewees cultural affiliations beyond the workplace, it is evident that almost all participants, whether in the teaching or non-teaching fields, already had a preexisting sense of Korean ethnic identity that developed

during their upbringing in Korea. At the same time, they also expressed how they were adding an American or bicultural layer or elements to their Korean identities without becoming fully American. Interestingly, being married to an American did not seem to correlate with being “less Korean” or “more American,” as Park felt she had actually become more Korean partially as a result of being married to an American and Bae maintained her strong Korean ethnic identity even after marrying an American and moving to the US (Diepenbrock, 2016). Park and Bae also mentioned that they felt that, as they got older, they had more nostalgia for Korea and had begun to affiliate more strongly with their Korean cultural identities. On the other hand, several other participants, regardless of how long they have been in the United States or how old they were, expressed that they were gradually becoming more like Americanized Koreans. For instance, Baek (teaching, age 52, 18 years) stated, “Before, I strongly felt that I was “Korean-Korean,” but now I am more of an Americanized Korean because my approach and thinking are a bit different from Korean-Koreans.” Shin (non-teaching, age 46, 18 years) also mentioned, “I do not feel American, but I feel different from a ‘typical Korean.’ I feel I am an Americanized Korean.” Thus, the major findings from this first section on identity beyond the workplace are that (1) intermarriage, amount of years lived in the US, and age of arrival to the US do not seem to strongly correlate with how Korean or how American one feels; and that (2) the major consensus among participants, whether in a teaching or non-teaching position, was that there was an already inherent Korean identity that was not lost, but was rather added to or reshaped with American cultural elements.

### 3. Korean Identity Maintenance/Reinforcement through Korean language Teaching

As the previous section showed that the participants' typically identified with variations of "Americanized Korean" or as Koreans with some American values and beliefs, this section aims to explore more specifically how and to what extent the ten Korean teachers interviewed were able to maintain the Koreanness of their "Americanized Korean" identity through the workplace.

While I asked several questions about Korean identity in the teaching environment, the theme of this section primarily emerged from two major questions as follows: (1) How has Korean teaching at DLI helped to shape, maintain, or reinforce your Korean identity? (2) If you had not taught Korean at DLI, but instead worked for an American company with American coworkers, how do you think your sense of Koreanness might have been different?

Of the ten Korean teachers, only one teacher chose the job partly due to preference to use the Korean language at work. For others, it was job security, degree qualifications, or a desire to stay in the US longer that attracted them to the DLI Korean teaching position. In addition, at work, all ten stated that they try to use Korean in the classroom at least 90 percent of the time and that, when interacting with colleagues, they almost always use Korean. In fact, several of the Korean teachers interviewed even referred to DLI's Korean school, or "the schoolhouse," as a mini-Korean community, a Korean niche community, a small Korea, and the like. So, when asked if Korean teaching at DLI has helped to shape,

maintain, or reinforce Korean identity, nine of the teachers replied that it in fact does. Then, in answering the first major question, “How has Korean teaching at DLI helped to shape, maintain, or reinforce your Korean identity,” two common responses emerged.

One popular response was that teachers were able to maintain their Korean identity through teaching because their position required them to act as “cultural diplomats.” For example, Hong (age 53, 17 years) stated:

Because we are teaching US soldiers and preparing them to eventually go to Korea, I have to teach them not only the Korean language, but also convey to them Korean cultural practices, behaviors, and societal issues. So, I feel that I am a Korean cultural ambassador with the responsibility of informing American students about Korea from multiple dimensions.

Kang (age 52, 21 years) shared similar feelings with Hong, mentioning that:

Working at DLI has shaped the way I see myself because students, especially back then (in the early 2000s), often knew very little about Korea; so, as teachers, it was our job to introduce Korean culture, enhancing my self-awareness of my own Korean identity.

Tied into the “cultural diplomats” response, the other popular way in which teachers felt they maintained or reinforced their Korean identity through teaching was by using authentic materials. According to Park (age 42, 20 years), whether they wanted to or not, Korean teachers were strongly encouraged and even required to use authentic materials such as Korean news coverage, dramas, songs, and games to engage students. Thus, teachers, too, had to consistently update themselves in Korean news and contemporary society to act as the cultural diplomats aforementioned. For seven of the teacher participants, the growing

international popularity of Korean culture in conjunction with the need to use authentic materials enhanced a sense of pride in being Korean and subsequently helped to positively maintain or reinforce Korean identity. For instance, although Yu (age 42, 17 years) expressed that she sometimes felt stuck in a “Korean bubble” because she is always surrounded by Koreans at work, she also felt a sense of pride in sharing Korean pop culture with her students, smiling as she said, “I really love BTS (K-pop group). It makes me proud to be able to speak Korean knowing that [BTS] is from the same country as me and that I get to share their music with my students.”

For two of the teachers, it was the nature of the Korean school in general that led to Korean identity maintenance, whether they liked it or not. In fact, when Park first came to the US to earn credits towards her undergraduate degree, she had a strong desire to become Americanized, spend time with American friends, and use English frequently. However, after securing a job at DLI, she was afraid she would lose her English due to the heavily Korean nature of the teaching environment. She recalled:

The purpose for getting my second master’s degree, once I had already started working at DLI, was to maintain my English because I knew that continuing to work at DLI would mean speaking almost all in Korean and interacting almost entirely with Koreans at work, which is already two-thirds of my day.

On the other hand, Byun (age 41, 15 years) separates his ethnic identity from the work environment, claiming that he identifies as a Korean-American and that the use of authentic materials at work does not impact his sense of Korean identity. In

fact, if anything, work makes him feel more American in some instances because he works for the US government and teaches American soldiers.

To further assess the nature of the teaching environment on Korean identity, I then asked my second question, a hypothetical question, “If you had not taught Korea at DLI, but rather worked for an American company with American coworkers, how do you think your sense of Koreanness might have been different?” Aside from Byun, the nine remaining teachers felt that they probably would not keep up with Korean culture and society as much as they do in their teaching positions and would probably incorporate more American values and beliefs into their “Americanized Korean” identities. To a greater extent, Noh (age 40, 10 years) mentioned, “If I hadn’t worked at DLI for as long as I have, I might have just forgotten that I was Korean and just said, ‘I’m American.’” Noh’s point in particular expresses just how much teaching at DLI helped her to maintain her Korean identity.

The findings from analyzing the interviews with the ten Korean DLI teachers were quite revealing and showed that, overall and aside from Byun’s case, the DLI teaching environment helped the interviewees maintain their Korean identity to some extent. For those that felt they either were taking on the role of cultural diplomat or were keeping in touch with their Korean roots through the requirement to use authentic materials, there was a sense of pride in conveying the Korean language and culture to American students, especially as American students showed more interest in Korean pop culture over the years. For others, even just the nature of the work environment helped them to maintain or reinforce their Korean identity. As Park mentioned, spending two-thirds of the average

weekday at work meant using the Korean language and interacting almost entirely with Korean colleagues, almost “forcing teachers” to remain involved with their Korean language and culture; Park was even worried about losing her English proficiency due to her work environment.

More revealing, DLI also seemed to be a place to enhance Korean identity beyond the workplace. Although six of the ten interviewees did interact with Korean co-ethnics through religious institutions on a regular basis, they also admitted to expanding their Korean social circles by becoming friends with some of their Korean colleagues outside of work. In addition, for Park and Hong (age 53, 17 years) who are married to Caucasian-Americans, they had not spent too much time with Korean friends outside of the workplace. However, after teaching at DLI, they have both gradually begun to expand their Korean friend groups by spending time with Korean colleagues in a casual setting. Ra (age 51, 22 years) also stated that many of his fellow DLI colleagues also attend the same temple as him, suggesting that, even in a non-work capacity, the replenishment of Koreans in Monterey through DLI, may also help to support interaction with co-ethnics and maintain Koreanness among DLI teachers in their personal lives.

Finally, in response to the hypothetical question, nine interviewees felt that they would probably become more Americanized in their values and ideas had they not worked in a Korean-teaching capacity. However, they all also felt that, to some degree, they would still identify as ethnically Korean, whether that be Korean-American, Americanized Korean, or the like. This suggests that the formative years, as seen in the prior section, instilled an inherent sense of Koreanness in the participants while the teaching position provided a space within the US through

which that Korean identity could exist unsuppressed alongside or in combination with acquired American cultural values.

#### 4. Learning American Culture Post-teaching or in Non-teaching Positions

In order to better gauge the impact of the Korean teaching workplace on maintaining or reinforcing Korean identity, I chose to interview an equal number of Korean DLI employees in non-teaching positions as a comparison group.

Surprisingly, of the ten non-teachers interviewed, nine actually initially started working at DLI as Korean teachers. Of those nine, the maximum length of teaching was seven years, while the minimum was one and a half years. Na (age 48, 20 years) entered DLI in a non-teaching position. This section primarily focuses on the identity of the ten non-teachers and how, in the case of the nine participants who once were teachers, switching to a non-teaching position has changed their sense of Koreanness. I will then share findings from Na's interview, as Na's unique position has added important information to this topic of identity among non-teachers.

With the nine non-teachers who were previously teachers, I began by first asking the question, "Why did you switch from a teaching to non-teaching position?" The responses varied, but five of the nine actually had slightly negative undertones. For example, Shin (age 46, 18 years) described that when she first came to the United States, she actually wanted to spend more time with American friends and was already beginning to take on more American values such as individualism over collectivism, and personal happiness over Confucian filial

piety. In addition, she recalls not really having been attracted to DLI at first but desired to stay in the US longer and therefore applied because of her previous Korean-teaching experience on the East Coast. However, after three years of teaching, she switched to her non-teaching position, explaining:

I do not want to give up my inherent Koreanness, but I always wanted to learn the American social and work cultures and improve my English. I do not want to be stuck in Korea, but, unfortunately, the Korean schoolhouse was like being stuck in a Korean bubble in which I had to be forced to be Korean. I did not like that kind of pressure.

Hwang, (age 43, 18 years) shared similar feelings, jokingly stating that she felt, “caged in a Korean community” during her five years in the Korean schoolhouse; and Kwon (age 59, 26 years) explicitly stated:

The reason I switched to a non-teaching position was because the environment [at the Korean schoolhouse] felt toxic. Many of the older coworkers were lazy, and everyone was in competition rather than helping and supporting each other. Working in the Korean teaching setting actually made me feel a bit embarrassed and ashamed of being Korean.

These sentiments are quite revealing, suggesting that one main reason for switching to a non-teaching position had to do with negative perceptions of the in-group, as explained by social identity theory, and the subsequent distancing from members of that group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). However, it is important to note that these teachers all still identified with their Korean ethnic identities and therefore did not leave the ethnic group. Rather, they wanted to explore a second more American social group and “expand their cultural horizons and try something new” as Oh (age 53, 29 years) put it.

Some of the current teachers had similar feelings as these non-teachers. As mentioned above, Yu (teaching, age 42, 17 years) also mentioned, “Sometimes I feel trapped in a Korean bubble, which prevents me from being able to more fully immerse in US culture.” In addition, Baek (teaching, age 52, 18 years) also recalled that:

Korea is a very small country with a large population, so there is a lot of competition among Koreans. In the same way, the Korean schoolhouse is a small segment of DLI, but with a large teacher population, so the environment here can also sometimes can be quite competitive.

However, perhaps for Yu and Baek, the competitive environment or the feeling of being too enclosed by the Korean ethnic group is not negative enough, if at all, to want them to switch as it was for those non-teachers who left teaching for those reasons.

Conversely, Koh (age 45, 20 years) switched to a non-teaching position in order to develop his career potential and gain a diverse range of job skills. He also expressed a desire to go back into teaching in the future and still has a strong sense of Koreanness outside of the workplace, possibly suggesting that his Korean ethnic identity aligns with the “DLI Korean teacher” social group characteristics.

Refocusing on the nine non-teachers who switched from teaching positions, I then asked questions regarding their level of Korean ethnic identity in their previous teaching positions, so I asked, “How has Korean teaching at DLI helped shape, maintain, or reinforce your Korean identity as opposed to now?” All nine felt teaching did not change their general identification as a Korean person. However, seven of the nine felt that teaching definitely reinforced their sense of

Koreanness and awareness of their Korean cultural background as opposed to now. Eight of the nine additionally felt that, in their current non-teaching positions, they had become more aligned with American cultural values and work etiquette. For example, Koh mentioned that:

DLI Korean teachers tend to be very proud to be Korean because they are conveying their ethnic language and culture to non-Koreans. While teaching, I also felt proud and had a strong sense of Korean identity. However, after coming into a non-teaching position, I never think about my Korean identity in the workplace. I think I have also become a little less nationalistic toward Korea after switching because I am no longer as immersed in the language and culture at work, and, in some regards, I feel that I have become more Americanized in my non-teaching position.

Moon (age 43, 18 years) expressed:

When teaching, I would have never had thought I was an American. I actually felt more Korean while teaching at DLI than I did in Korea! Now, in my non-teaching position, I don't feel as patriotic [towards Korea] as I did while I was teaching, and I feel a little more detached from Korea and more Americanized in my non-teaching position.

Oh also shared:

While teaching, I felt a little more Korean than I do now. I also had big pride in being a Korean when sharing Korean pop culture materials with my students. Now, I definitely feel more Americanized *because* of my current work. During work, my conflict resolution style is now more American - I'm not afraid to go against superiority for what is right. When I was teaching, I felt more restricted and stuck with the hierarchical Confucian system that still existed among the Korean teachers. My non-teaching position has also allowed me to expand my social circle outside of work and I now have many American friends who I spend time with outside of DLI.

The two exceptions were Jung (age 51, 25 years), who felt that her Koreanness was already a big part of who she is and so was not really reinforced while teaching; and Kwon who, although acknowledging that she is Korean, has become less attached to identifying based on ethnic or cultural boundaries, such as Korean or American. Jung did express, however, that her non-teaching work has made her a bit more Americanized in the workplace as she now works with American colleagues and corresponds with colleagues in primarily in English.

Although the trend has been less connection to Korean identity at work and increasing alignment with American culture and values at work, when looking beyond the workplace, most of the non-teachers still expressed a solid grasp on their Koreanness. The main motivations for this were because they wanted their kids to grow up learning Korean culture and their Korean origins, because they were married to Korean spouses, or because they still had connections to the Korean homeland. In fact, Koh felt that although he had become more Americanized at work and was less nationalistic toward Korea compared to when he was teaching, once he went home, he became “Korean” again. As he put it:

When go home, I revert to being a Korean teacher or Korean ambassador for my kids. I watch Korean dramas and try to speak Korean with my kids so that they don't lose their Korean identity as second-generation Korean-Americans.

Finally, one of the non-teaching participants, Na (age 48, 16 years), actually felt that working in her non-teaching position had made her feel more Korean compared to her past positions outside of DLI. She explained:

Although I feel quite American in many instances and still spend time with mostly American friends outside of the

workplace, working at DLI has actually made me feel more Korean. When I worked for the US army, I used English 99 percent of the time and worked with many American soldiers. However, now, at DLI, I have been working on a project with two Korean coworkers and now use Korean 50 percent of the time. This had made me feel a bit more connected to my Koreanness.

However, despite feeling more Korean in her current DLI position, Na also insinuated that how outsiders perceived her also impacted her identity as a Korean.

For instance, she mentioned:

Although I work directly with two Korean colleagues, I sometimes feel a bit different from them. They sometimes ask me to write emails in English for them and speak in English to them, so I feel like the “American” of the group. Also, I think that the Korean community outside of DLI tends to see DLI Korean teachers as more Korean. When I go to my Korean church, some of the church members ask me if I am a Korean teacher at DLI, and when I say I am not, they seem to think maybe I am a little less Korean.

Na’s interview added a new perspective to the study as her responses suggested that feeling more or less Korean could also be relative to prior work positions or surroundings. In Na’s case, coming from a very American style work setting to a more Korean work environment with Korean team members with whom to speak Korean has made her feel more Korean. Interestingly, however, her interview also shed light on the fact that how one identifies as Korean could also be in relation to how members within the same ethnic group treat her. Again, in Na’s case, the perceptions of both her team members and the Korean community outside of DLI have made her feel “not as Korean” as those who were or currently are DLI teachers. This image of DLI Korean teachers as being “more Korean” than non-

teaching Korean DLI employees and the influence of ethnic community perceptions on identity are certainly topics that would be interesting to study more deeply in future research.

**Table 1.** Demographics of the ten DLI Korean Language Teachers

TEACHERS											
Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Length of stay in US (years)	Position	Length in teaching position (years)	Bachelor's Degree		Master's Degree		Reason for coming to the US	Reason for joining DLI
						Major	Country	Major	Country		
Jang	F	55	20	Korean teacher	13	English Literature	Korea	Applied Linguistics	USA	Spouse relocation	Ideal location and job security
Ra	M	51	22	Korean teacher	15	French Literature	Korea	Linguistics	USA	Study	Enjoy teaching, recommended by a friend
Noh	F	40	10	Korean teacher	8	Psychology	Korea	TESOL	USA	Study	Wanted to stay in the US longer; recommended by a friend
Song	F	57	14	Korean teacher	9	International Marketing	USA	Foreign Language Acquisition	USA	Study (for BA), returned to US to raise children and earn MA	Wanted to stay in the US, job related to prior teaching experience and degree
Yu	F	42	17	Korean teacher	13	French Language and Literature	Korea	TESOL	USA	Strong desire to live in US; came for MA	Job security; introduced by friends
Baek	F	52	18	Korean teacher	16	Portuguese and English Literature	Korea	1. Comparative (Brazilian and Korean) Literature 2. Translation	1. Korea 2. USA	Study	background in education; DLI family "legacy"
Kang	F	52	21	Korean teacher	15	Mathematics	Korea	Education Technology and Science	USA	Raise children	good job security; comfort using Korean language in work
Park	F	42	20	Korean teacher	16	Korean Language and Literature	Korea	(1) International Policy; (2) Teaching Foreign Language	USA (for both)	Study; desire to help provide better life for family member in a difficult situation	Desire to stay in the US; Korean language teaching qualification
Hong	F	53	17	Korean teacher	10	Linguistics	USA	Teaching Foreign Language	USA	Study	Job security
Byun	M	41	15	Korean teacher	12	English Education	USA	(1) International Studies; (2) Translation and Interpretation	(1) Korea (2) USA	To improve English skills	wanted work and study simultaneously in US

**Table 2.** Demographics of the ten DLI Participants in Non-Teaching Positions

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Length of stay in US (years)	Position	Length in teaching position (years)	Length in non-teaching position (years)	Bachelor's Degree		Master's Degree		Reason for coming to the US	Reason for joining DLI
							Major	Country	Major	Country		
Koh	M	45	20	Immersion Language Coordinator	7	7	Linguistics	USA	TESOL	USA	Wanted to get the degree to teach English in Korea	prior Korean teaching experience in US; job security to support family
Hwang	F	43	18	D5 Testing Specialist	5	12	Korean Language and Literature	Korea	Translation	USA	Study (MA)	Good job benefits, job security
Moon	F	43	18	DLPT 5 Development Specialist	3	13	French	Korea	(1) Linguistics (2) International Comparative Education	(1) Korea (2) USA	Study (MA)	Good job benefits, job security
Na	F	48	16	Statistical Assistant at DLI FLC	0	15	(1) French Linguistics (2) Information Technology	(1) Korea (2) USA	Political Science / International Relations	USA	Study (MA)	Spouse was doing language training at DLI; location was ideal
Jung	F	51	25	Test Item Writer	1.5	18	Food Science	Korea	Education (Curriculum and Instruction)	USA	Study (MA)	Job security; wanted to stay in the US a bit longer
Kwon	F	59	26	Assistant Director of Language Immersion Office	1.5	16	Sociology; English minor	Korea	Sociology	Korea	Study	Good pay and potential for job growth; enjoyed language teaching
Shin	F	46	18	Educational Measurement Specialist	3	10	Korean Language and Literature	Korea	Applied Linguistics	USA	Study (MA)	Wanted to stay in US; good job security
Bae	F	52	20	Test Item Development Specialist; COR	4	11	Engineering	Korea	Linguistics	USA	Study; American spouse	Job security
Lee	M	56	17	Project Manager	2	15	Political Science	Korea	Political Science	New Zealand (MA); Australia (PhD)	Job offer	DLI job offer; job security
Oh	F	53	29	OPI Education Specialist	4	21	English Education	Korea	Foreign Language Teaching	USA	American spouse	Spouse was a graduate of DLI; interested in foreign language teaching and good job security

## VI. Discussion

The main purpose of this research was to examine how the ethnic workplace helped first-generation immigrants maintain their Korean identity. In particular, I sought to understand how first-generation Korean language teachers in the United States were able to maintain their sense of Koreanness through the workplace.

The three dominant assimilation theories outlined earlier have conventionally suggested that factors such as length of time lived in the US, English proficiency, educational attainment, intermarriage with Americans, residence outside of ethnic enclaves, socioeconomic status, physical racial factors, and motivation to live in the US were potential pathways toward assimilation. In considering the factors mentioned above, more recent scholars found Korean immigrants in particular to come mostly from the middle-class, have strong levels of success in socioeconomic status, good English proficiency, usually had at least a bachelor's degree, and had strong determination to live in the United States (Cho, 2012). When juxtaposed with these characteristics, my interview group also aligned to some extent. To begin with, all twenty of my interviewees had at least a master's degree and nearly all obtained their higher degrees from English-speaking countries. They all lived in the United States for at least a decade; earned incomes of at least between a GS-9 to GS-11 status equivalent on the Faculty Personnel System (FPS); and had at least DLI level two English proficiency, which is working proficiency. In addition, during their master's programs and before starting work at DLI, twelve of the ten interviewees spent time in American friend

groups or a mix of Korean and American friend groups and felt quite comfortable with American culture. Thus, even before working at DLI, they felt that, although they still identified as ethnically Korean, they were becoming Americanized Koreans. Even among the remaining eight teachers who spent time with Korean international students during their degree programs in the US, there was either a strong desire to live or work in the US or the motivation to raise children in the US.

Other factors such as intermarriage, length of time spent in the US, and age of arrival to the US did not seem to significantly influence levels of Americanization or Korean ethnic identity. For instance, as Park (teaching, age 42, 20 years) and Bae (non-teaching, age 52, 20 years) expressed, marriage with Caucasian-Americans did not cause them to become more Americanized. In fact, both have mentioned that they feel that with age, they have leaned more on their Korean ethnic identities, and Park felt that marrying an American actually made her feel more Korean. Yu (teaching, age 42, 17 years) also felt that marrying an American impacted her identity very little and stated that she continues to attend Korean church services while her husband attends English services. This suggests that, for Yu, her Korean identity was not consolidated, nor her Americanness enhanced due to intermarriage.

Amount of time in the United States and age upon arrival also diverged from the typical effects of the assimilation factors. For example, despite coming to the US for her bachelor studies in her early twenties, Park has expressed that she feels she has become more Korean over the course of the twenty years that she has lived in the US. On the other hand, Noh (teaching, age 40, 10 years), although she has been in the US the least amount of time among the participants, feels like an

Americanized Korean and even have one of the stronger responses to the hypothetical question, “If you had not taught Korean at DLI, but instead worked at for an American company with American coworkers, how do you think your sense of Koreanness might have been different,” replying that she might have forgotten she was Korean and just identified as American.

Across the board, none of the interviewees felt they were completely American even if they held US citizenship. Rather, they all responded that they had an underlying backbone Korean ethnic identity that was inherent because of where they were born and raised. Instead, they commonly stated that they felt between Korean and US cultures, were Americanized Koreans or Korean-Americans, or were some variation of a Korean who was different from Koreans in Korea, but not quite American. This suggests that perhaps while some factors outlined by the assimilation theories may be able to explain levels of American cultural adjustment, not all factors can. In this sense, segmented assimilation theory may seem most appealing as it considers immigrants picking and choosing factors of both cultures that seem beneficial, allowing them to maintain their ethnic identity and while also adopting host culture elements (Zhou, 1997; Cho, 2012). However, while simply writing off that Korean ethnic identity maintenance was a result of choosing the “bicultural path” proposed by segmented assimilation and that the teaching workplace setting just happened to promote Korean cultural markers and values deemed beneficial, the fact that only two teachers felt they were becoming more familiar with American culture and values as a result of the workplace as opposed to seven non-teachers was puzzling.

Assessing the teaching workplace with immigrant replenishment hypothesis helped to fill the some of the gaps of prior assimilation theories and expand on new assimilation theory to account for a constantly transforming US mainstream as a result of the constant flux of contemporary immigrants. Using immigrant replenishment theory, this research aimed to show how the Korean schoolhouse acted as a center of immigrant replenishment through which Korean teachers were constantly exposed to fellow Korean teachers, consistently spoke the Korean language, and needed to keep up to date on Korean news, culture, and societal issues and events to convey to their students (Jimenez, 2008). In addition, growing international acclaim of Korean popular culture has instilled a sense of pride in those Korean teachers who use pop culture materials as a form of authentic materials through which to engage their students (Jang & Sohn, 2013). According to social identity theory, ethnic pride or pride for certain ethnic cultural elements such as the Korean Wave often positively reinforcement ethnic group members' alignment with that group, increasing their ethnic identity or, in this case, sense of Koreanness (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

On the opposite side of the social identity theory spectrum, when group members feel shame, embarrassment, or other negative feelings associated with elements of the ethnic group, they may choose to “leave” that group, or loosen ties with that group (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Among the non-teaching participants, five of the nine who previously held teaching positions switched due to some slightly negative sentiments toward the DLI Korean teaching group or environment. For example, some felt they were trapped inside a Korean bubble, some felt disappointed in the Confucian-style hierarchy still existent within the schoolhouse,

and others simply came into conflict with other specific members of the group. Furthermore, many of the non-teachers, most of whom have been at DLI a bit longer than the current teachers, explained that they taught before Korean pop culture became widespread, which may indicate that their ethnic pride could have been lower than that of current teachers engaged in Korean pop culture. Of course, further inquiry would be needed to understand this possible phenomenon.

## VII. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While my study does widen the discussion pertaining to assimilation theory in general and immigrant replenishment in particular and adds to literature on the impact of Korean authentic materials and pop culture on Korean identity maintenance in the workplace, there are, of course, limitations as well. One of the first major limitations was the sampling method used. Because I did not have many contacts within my specific target group, snowball sampling seemed the most appropriate method to implement. However, this also meant that there would be a lack of diversity within my participant group. For instance, all interviewees were between the ages of 40 to 59, had been in the United States for at least a decade and 16 of the twenty participants were female. These characteristics are perhaps a result of the snowball sampling method. Future studies could certainly use more random sampling methods to ensure greater age variation and number of years that first-generation Korean immigrants spent in the US. It would also help to have a more gender-balanced participant group.

Another limitation was the lack of participants who had not switched from a teaching to non-teaching position. In fact, Na was the only interviewee who had not first entered DLI as a Korean teacher. Had there been more participants in non-teaching positions who were not initially teachers, there could have possibly been findings of other trends such as becoming more Korean in a non-teaching work setting as Na discussed. Therefore, future studies could also benefit from stratified random sampling in order to gather enough interviewee representation from a variety of work backgrounds.

Because my study focused specifically on first-generation Korean-language teachers in the United States, my participant group was rather unique. Not only do they simply hold white-collar positions and have high levels of English proficiency, but they also work for the US Department of Defense teaching Korean as a strategic language to military intelligence in a predominately White community. My participants' status as first-generation Koreans in the US makes my study even more specific and could also be another cause for limitations. Although I purposely chose to focus on the first-generation group due to their larger population within DLI and in order to control for differences between Koreans of other immigrant generation cohorts, this specification could also make it more difficult to see the effects of the Korean language teaching environment. For instance, had I compared first-generation teachers to a group of 1.5 or second-generation teachers, I may have been better able to understand the impact of the Korean teaching environment on Korean identity maintenance or reinforcement. If 1.5-generation Koreans (Koreans who spent approximately half of their childhoods in the US) or second-generation Koreans displayed some signs of being able to

reinforce Korean identity through Korean language teaching, this could strengthen the results. As first-generation immigrants are often more set in their ethnic identities based on childhood upbringing, future research could certainly benefit from comparing the first-generation to 1.5 or second-generation Koreans in the language teaching workplace.

Furthermore, specific clarification with participants on the terms that they used would be very valuable for future research. Most of participants used the term “ethnic identity” interchangeably with the term “Koreanness.” This was therefore how the two terms were approached throughout this study. However, a few participants used the two with slightly different connotations, seeing Koreanness as more surface-level characteristics such as food choices, language, and Korean media consumption. Although I overall concluded that the interviewees typically used ethnic identity and Koreanness to refer to the same concept, it would certainly be valuable in future studies to ask the participants specifically what they mean by “Koreanness.”

On a final note, while I did include a question on how teachers felt their students identified them, there was not too much discussion on this topic. However, it would also be worth examining how others’ perceptions of the participants may also impact the participants’ own Korean identities, especially within the context of my focus group in which the interviewee’s students were usually Caucasian military soldiers, several of whom have never seen a Korean person in their lives before coming to DLI.

## VIII. Conclusion

Contemporary immigrants are consistently arriving to the United States, significantly reshaping and contributing to US mainstream society. This constant flux of immigrants has essentially allowed for immigrant replenishment, allowing co-ethnics in the United States to interact and therefore maintain their ethnic identity (Jimenez, 2008). In light of the immigrant replenishment hypothesis, my results showed that co-ethnic interaction among first-generation Korean language teachers in the Korean teaching workplace has helped them to maintain or reinforce their Koreanness. In addition, the rise of the Korean Wave and the variety of authentic Korean materials such as news articles, Korean dramas, and K-pop music that come with teaching has instilled a sense of ethnic pride in the participants as they shared their Korean culture with American students. This pride in sharing Korean culture, especially as Korean culture has become more internationally and positively recognized is particularly true among first-generation Korean immigrants and transnationals (Yook, et al., 2014). On the other hand, this study also shows that, in some cases, when Korean culture and language are applied too heavily within a diverse country such as the US, some may feel like exploring beyond the “Korean bubble” and learn cultural values and behaviors of the host society.

Overall, this study offers greater insight into the two-way process of assimilation - that immigrants can maintain or reinforce their ethnic identity just as much as they can adopt the values and cultural practices of US mainstream society. Although this research is not without limitations, this study widens the discussion

on current assimilation trends and the environments and strategies used to help immigrants retain their ethnic identity. To add to the discussion even more, scholars should continue exploring the ways and environments in which immigrants can maintain their ethnic identities.

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## Appendix A

### Teachers' Guide (For DLI Korean Language Instructors)

#### Objectives:

- a. How does working around others of the same ethnic group influence one's self ethnic identity?
- b. How does use of the heritage language and authentic cultural materials at work influence self-ethnic identity?

#### Questions:

##### **I. Demographics**

Name:

Age:

Position:

Educational background:

- Where and in what did you earn your
  - o Bachelors:
  - o Masters:

At what age did you come to the USA?

##### **II. Background**

1. What was your motivation for learning English at the working proficiency level?
2. What motivated you to immigrate to the US?
3. What language do you use most at home?
4. What brought you to DLI? What about your position at DLI attracted you to the job initially?

##### **III. Personal Affiliations**

5. With what cultures do you affiliate? How did these cultural affiliations take shape?
6. Which groups of people do you affiliate with most outside of the workplace? Would you say you and your friends have a shared identity or cultural affiliations? What is that?

#### **IV. In the Workplace**

##### **Among Students**

7. How do you feel your students see you? How do you want them to see you?
8. Do you go beyond the required teaching materials to introduce the Korean language and culture to your students? How so? Do those materials shape your Korean identity at all? How?
9. How often is English used in the classroom? Korean?
10. How do you think that teaching Korean and using the Korean language in the classroom has shaped your identity, if at all?

##### **Among Colleagues**

11. Is there often close collaboration or interaction with other Korean teachers in the workplace? What types of collaborations or interactions take place?
12. Do you feel a shared sense of identity or shared cultural affiliations with your fellow colleagues?
13. How often do you use English among your colleagues? What about Korean?
14. How do you think that working with/around other ethnic Koreans has shaped your identity, if at all?

## Appendix B

### Non-teachers' Guide (For DLI Korean Interviewees in Non-Teaching Positions)

Objectives:

- a. How does the non-teaching workplace compare to the teaching workplace?
- b. Does Koreanness or Korean identity affiliation decrease in the non-teaching workplace?

Questions:

#### **I. Demographics**

Name:

Age:

Position:

Educational background:

- Where and in what did you earn your
  - o Bachelors:
  - o Masters:

At what age did you come to the USA?

#### **II. Background**

1. What was your motivation for learning English at the working proficiency level?
2. What motivated you to immigrate to the US?
3. What language do you use most at home?
4. What brought you to DLI? What about your position at DLI attracted you to the job initially?

#### **III. Personal Affiliations**

5. With what cultures do you affiliate? How did these cultural affiliations take shape?
6. Which groups of people do you affiliate with most outside of the workplace? Would you say you and your friends have a shared identity or cultural affiliations? What is that?
7. How connected are you to Korean society and culture? Do you follow Korean news, watch Korean shows, etc.?

#### **IV. In the Workplace**

8. For those who previously taught: Why did you transition from a teaching to non-teaching positions?

9. How do you think your identity or Koreanness has changed in your current work setting, if at all?

10. Has working with colleagues of various cultural backgrounds made you feel more or less Americanized? In what ways?

## Appendix C

### Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

#### Identity Construction/Maintenance of First-Generation Korean Language Teachers in the US

##### Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sydney Thompson. The purpose of this research is to understand if and how teaching a foreign language impacts or reshapes one's self identity. In particular, the research will be looking into the impact of Korean language teaching on first-generation Korean language teachers who have a good grasp of the English language.

Your participation will involve describing your experiences as a **Korean language teacher** in the workplace through an interview. The interview should last approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

##### Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research.

##### Potential benefits

This research may help us to further understand the impact language teaching on identity as well as the roll that the unique environments of large foreign language institutions like DLI plays on a language teacher's identity construction.

##### Protection of confidentiality

The information that you provide in the interview will only be used for the purpose of this research. Voice recordings will only be used for will only be used by the researcher and only for easier data collection. Your name and background information are only for organizational purposes and will be under anonymous or a pseudonym in the final thesis. **I will do everything I can to protect your privacy and your identity will not be revealed in any published versions of this thesis**

##### Voluntary participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary and you may opt out from participation at any time. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate or to opt out of this study.

**Contact information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Sydney Thompson by phone at karunaspt@snu.ac.kr. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Seoul National University Graduate School of International Studies at +82-2-880-8501, 8505.

**Consent**

**I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.**

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 논문 초록

본 연구는 미국에서 한국어 교사로 재직중인 한국인 이민1세대를 대상으로 직장에서의 정체성 형성에 대해 알아보고자 한 것이다. 또한 문화적 동화와 관련된 연구 자료들에서 발견되는 지속적 이민자 유입 가설(immigrant replenishment hypothesis)을 토대로 직장 내에서의 동일 문화 및 동일 민족과의 지속적인 상호작용이 민족 정체성의 유지 또는 강화에 어떤 도움을 주는지에 대해 알아 보았다. 그리고 한국어 교육 환경이 끼치는 영향에 대해 보다 자세히 설명하기 위해 민족적 자긍심을 비롯해 사회적 민족적 정체성 같은 개념도 짚어 보았다.

본 연구를 위해 한국어 교사로 재직중인 10명의 참가자와 비교교사직에 재직중인 10명의 참가자, 총 20명을 인터뷰하였다. 20명의 참가자는 모두 미국 캘리포니아주 몬트레이 소재 국방외국어대학 (Defense Language Institute, DLI)에 재직중이며 인터뷰를 통해 자신들의 DLI 근무 경험과, 교사직 비교사직 근무 환경이 민족 정체성 또는 한국성 (Koreanness) 형성에 어떤 영향을 미치는지 진솔하게 진술해 주었다.

10명의 교사들과의 인터뷰를 통해 확인한 사실은 한국어 교육 환경이 이들 중 많은 참가자들의 한국성 유지나 강화에 실제로 영향을 미친다는 것이었다. 또한 한국어 교사들이 대부분의 근무시간 동안 한국어를 사용하고, 동료 한국인 교사들과 교류하며, 학생들을 위해 계속적으로 한국 뉴스나 한국 팝문화를 교재로 준비한다는 점이 한국성 강화의 주된 원인인 것으로 나타났다. 더불어 한국인이 아닌 학생들을 대상으로 한국 실제

자료를 사용하며 느끼는 자부심이 한국인으로서의 정체성 강화에 긍정적인 영향을 주는 것으로 나타났다.

**핵심 용어:** 민족 정체성; 한국성; 지속적 이민자 유입; 한국어 교육; 민족적 자부심

**학생 번호:** 2017-2250

