국제학석사학위논문

Negotiating Identities: The Experiences of Korean Americans in South Korea

한국에 거주하는 재미교포의 정체성 협상 경험에 관한 연구

2015년 8월

서울대학교 국제대학원

국제학과 국제협력전공

권 규 민

한국에 거주하는 재미교포의 정체성 협상 경험에 관한 연구

지도교수 은기수

이 논문을 국제학 석사학위논문으로 제출함

2015년 7월

서울대학교 국제대학원

국제학과 국제협력전공

권규민

권규민의 석사학위논문을 인준함

2015년 7월

위 원 장 _____김태균_____ (인)

부 위 원 장 _____문현아_____ (인)

위 원 _____은기수_____ (인)

Negotiating Identities: The Experiences of Korean Americans in South Korea

Professor Ki-Soo, Eun

Submitting a master's of International Cooperation

July 2015

Graduate School of Seoul National University

International Cooperation Major

Kyumin, Kwon

Confirming the master's thesis written by Kyumin, Kwon

July 2015

Chair Tae-Kyoon, Kim (Seal)

Vice Chair Hyun-A, Moon (Seal)

Examiner Ki-Soo, Eun (Seal)

Abstract

Negotiating Identities: The Experiences of Korean Americans in South Korea

Kyumin Kwon
The Graduate School of International Studies
Seoul National University
International Cooperation Major

In recent decades, the number of diasporic descendants returning to their ancestral homelands has increased significantly. In accordance with the current growth of return migration, scholars are increasingly beginning to document the experiences of various kinds of return migrants. In line with this trend, this study examines of Korean Americans who have returned to their ancestral homeland, South Korea. Specifically, this study focuses on exploring their return motives, experiences in South Korea, and how these experiences affect their ethnic identities, and sense of belonging. For this, 17 second generation Korean Americans who voluntarily returned to Korea individually as young adults were selected through snowballing sampling, and semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out. The major findings of this study are as follows:

Korean Americans return to South Korea with the purpose of finding suitable jobs, or pursuing higher education. However, they are not returning to their ancestral homelands simply for economic, and educational opportunities. The desire to reconnect with their ethnic roots, and explore cultural heritage strongly figure in their return decisions. Such motives are essentially associated with their yearnings for a more stable ethnic identity, and belonging. However, their self-identity as Korean becomes challenged and problematized

upon their arrivals in the ancestral homeland. According to data from the interviews, the returnees are often ethnically excluded as a cultural stranger due to their lack of linguistic and cultural competencies, and become subject to certain stereotypes and prejudices in everyday life. Furthermore, as they experience various cultural differences, they come to recognize the fundamental differences between themselves, and Koreans born and raised in South Korea. Facing unexpected challenges, Korean American returnees renegotiate their ethnic identities. Eventually, they realize that they are not fully Korean, and reaffirm 'Korean American (Jaemigyopo)' identities.

……

Keywords: return migration, ethnic identity, second generation Korean American

***Student Number*: 2013-22046**

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of Study

The aim of this study is to examine Korean American return migrants focusing on their experiences in Korea. This study focuses on the narratives of Korean American returnees, and places their perspectives at the forefront of analysis. This study takes a qualitative approach based on in-depth interview with 17 second generation Korean Americans living in Seoul. All of this study's interviewees were born and raised in the United States, and voluntarily returned to South Korea as independent adults.

In recent decades, return migration has considerably increased across the world. Return migration refers to movement of diasporic individuals to the country of their ancestral origin (Kibria, 2002; King, 2000; Tsuda, 2013) The use of the concept of 'return' mirrors return migrants' own perception of their transfer to the country of origin no matter whether their return is permanent or not (Wessendorf, 2007). The classical example of return migration is that of the millions of Jews in the diaspora who have returned to Israel since World War II. In East Asia, around a million of second to third generation Japanese and Korean descendants from Latin America, Eastern Europe, and China have return migrated to their ancestral homelands since the late 1980s (Tsuda, 2003).

Although a number of scholars have examined the formation and development of diasporas, relatively few have studied return migration phenomena where diasporic people return to the country of their ancestral origin after residing outside their ancestral homeland for many years (King, 2000; Tsuda, 2013). However, the study of return migration is a small growing research field within international migration studies. Unlike the general migration phenomena, return migration has been often framed as a search of belonging and home (King & Christou 2008b). A growing number of studies have documented the lives of various kinds of return migrants, and explored their journeys of finding who they are, and

where their true home is (Wessendorf, 2007; King, 2000; Tsuda, 2000; Kwon, 2008; Maruyama et al., 2010).

In particular, many studies have pointed out the negative experiences in the ethnic homeland and following renegotiations of ethnic identities among return migrants. In spite of their expectations of sense of belonging and acceptance based on shared ancestral origin, return migrants in these studies encountered various discriminations and prejudices in their ethnic homelands and accordingly, their identities went through changes. The cause for ethnic marginalization of return migrants in their ancestral homeland is associated with various social, cultural, and political factors.

For example, Japanese Brazilian return migrants are socially alienated in Japan primarily due to their status as low-skilled workers (Tsuda, 2003). In case of Korean Japanese returnees, they are often subject to prejudices in South Korea due to their lack of Korean skills, and anti-Japanese sentiment in Korean society attributed to the Japanese colonial rule in Korea during 1910-1940s (Kwon, 2008). Therefore, return migration is an interesting research field where we can explore negotiations of identities by various subjects—history, ethnicity, class, and culture—involved. Also, studying return migration provides us a lens through which we can further understand the lives, and identities of return migrants.

In South Korea, an increasing number of studies have examined the experiences of return migrants as well. While many studies have been carried out on Korean Chinese, and Korean Japanese returnees, there is only a handful of researches on Korean American returnees. Considering the fact that Korean Americans are the second largest population of overseas Koreans residing in South Korea, there is a need for further studies on them. Moreover, while previous researches on Korean American return migrants have primarily focused on their and identities, they do not adequately include discussion on return motives.

Thus, this study builds on the extensive body of work on Korean American returnees to include analysis on their motivations for return. In this study, I will examine the experiences

of second generation Korean Americans who have returned to the ancestral homeland. Through the returnee's narratives, this study seeks to explore: 1) Why second generation Korean Americans return to their ancestral homeland; 2) How they experience their return, and 3) how these experiences affect their identities and sense of belonging.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity refers to real or imagined shared ancestry, a collective history and a common culture (Cornell & Hartmann 2007). On the one hand, ethnic identity is subjective since it is product of human mind and human sentiments. It is the matter of identification and sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group (Yetman 1991). On the other hand, ethnic identity is objective because it must be based on some objective characteristics such as physical attributes, presumed ancestry, culture, or national origin (Yang, 2000) Ethnic identity is constructed by social forces and power relations and thus, to a large extent independent of individuals' desires.

Over the years, scholars have discussed the nature of ethnic identity from two opposing perspectives: primordialism and constructivism. Primordialism is based on the three main arguments. First, ethnic identity is an ascribed identity or assigned status, something inherited from one's ancestors. For example, if your ancestors are Korean, then you are also Korean because you inherit physical and cultural characteristics from your ancestors. Ethnic identity is a very deeply rooted, primal bond to one's ancestral bloodline. Second, primordialism argues that ethnic identity is static and unchangeable because ethnic boundaries which demarcate who is a member of an ethnic group and who is not, are fixed or immutable. Finally, primordialists argued that it is the primordial bonds that give rise to and sustain ethnic identity. They stress the role of primordial factors such as lineage and cultural ties in determining ethnic identity (Geertz 1973; Isaacs 1975; Van den Berghe 1981; Yang, 2000)

Primordialist approach provides a plausible explanation for the rise and tenacity of ethnic attachment. However, primordialism contains several limitations as follows: First, this perspective cannot explain why ethnic memberships or identities of individuals and groups change. Second, it cannot fully account for why new ethnic identities such as Asian American emerge and why ethnic identities wane and disappear. Third, it tends to overlook the larger structural conditions that construct and deconstruct ethnic membership (Yang, 2000.)

On the other hand, Constructivism suggests contrasting views to primordialism on the nature and meanings of ethnic identity. Constructivism have three major arguments as follows: First ethnic identity is a socially constructed identity, not something that is inherited and given. Second, ethnic identity is dynamic as ethnic boundaries are flexible and changeable. Finally, ethnic identification and sense of belonging can change in a reaction to changing social environment (Yang, 2000).

According to constructivism, Ethnic identities are constructed through social interaction, forming through a dialectical process of social categorization by others and individual identity assertion (Barth 1969; Nagel 1994; Jenkins 2004). That is, ethnic identity is the result of an interactive process involving individual's self-identification and outsiders' ethnic designations—what you think your ethnicity is, versus what they think your ethnicity is (Nagel, 1994). Thus, ethnic identity can be both optional and mandatory as individual choices are circumscribed by the ethnic categories available at a particular time and place. That is, while an individual can choose from among a set of ethnic identities, that set is generally limited to socially and politically defined ethnic categories with varying degrees of stigma or advantage attached to them (Nagel, 1994.)

This study heavily relies on constructivist perspectives in understanding ethnic identity changes of second generation Korean Americans. In particular, I will focus on how ethnic identities of second generation Korean Americans are reconstructed through social interactions with Koreans who were born and raised in Korea. However, this study also

considers primordialist perspective since ancestral roots, and ethnic heritage are important components of second generation Korean Americans' ethnic identity.

1.2.2. Return Migration

Return migration refers to movement of diasporic individuals to the country of their ancestral origin (Kibria, 2002; King, 2000). In recent years, return migration has been used as a term to contain short-term visit to a homeland, mid-long term staying or permanent return. Return migration can be categorized into two categories: the return migration of first-generation diasporic peoples who move back to their homeland (country of birth) and that of later-generation descendants of diasporic peoples who 'return' to their countries of ancestral origin after living outside their ethnic homelands for generations (Tsuda, 2013). In the latter case, the use of the concept of 'return' mirrors the later generation's own perception of their transfer to the country of origin (Wessendorf, 2007).

The classical example of return migration is that of the millions of Jews in the diaspora who have returned to Israel since World War II. The largest group of Jewish ethnic return migrants has come from the former Soviet Union, more than 770, 000 of whom entered Israel between 1990 and 1999 (Levy & Weingrod 2005; Remennick, 2003; Tsuda, 2013). In East Asia, around a million of second to third generation Japanese and Korean descendants from Latin America, Eastern Europe, and China have return migrated to their ancestral homelands since the late 1980s (Tsuda, 2003).

In general, diasporic descendants are generally migrating from less developed countries to more developed countries seeking for jobs, higher incomes, and a better standard of living. In this sense, return migration from the developing countries initially appears to be another form of international labor migration which is caused by economic gap between rich and poor nations (Tsuda, 2013). However what makes return migration distinct from international labor migration is that it is generally instigated by not only economic considerations but also ethnic connections, and the immigration policies that favor ethnic connection in the ancestral homeland (Kwon, 2008). The prominent example is the ethnic

return migration of Japanese descendants from Latin America, so called 'Nikkejin', which was triggered by the Japan's rapid economic development and immigration policies that favor the ethnic connection (Tsuda, 2003). In another case, Korean Chinese descendants have also return-migrated to Korea on a large scale in search of low-skilled jobs since late 1980s, now occupying the majority of overseas Korean population residing in South Korea (Seol, 2009).

In addition, there is a smaller but growing population of professionals and students from developed countries in North America and Europe who migrate to their countries of ancestral origin. Although many are seeking professional, educational, or business investment opportunities in their ethnic homelands, the desire to reconnect with their ethnic roots and explore their cultural heritage may be a stronger motive compared to return migrants from developing countries (Tsuda, 2013). For example, it has been reported that Greek Americans (Christou, 2006), Indian Americans (Jain, 2012), and Korean Japanese (Kwon, 2008) return to their ancestral homeland with a strong desire to foster an identity attached to their ethnic homeland, and satisfy longings for 'home'.

Return migration is very powerful, emotional and life-changing experiences (King & Christou, 2008a). Many studies note that experiences in the ancestral homeland lead to significant changes in identities, and sense of belonging. The outcome of such changes can be either positive or negative. Some studies pointed out that visiting the ancestral homeland reinforce a migrant's emotional attachment and sense of belonging (Day-Vines et al., 1998; Palmer, 1999; Cohen, 2004). For instance, Basu (2001) illustrated that Scottish Canadian tourists conceptualized Scotland as sites of memory, sources of identity, and shrines of self. By visiting Scotland, the Scottish descendants felt a sense of embodiment and internalized the collective memory. Such experiences allowed them to confirm the inherited connection to Scotland, and the visit represented a quest for self.

On the other hand, other studies have pointed out the negative experiences in the ethnic homeland and following renegotiations of ethnic identities among return migrants. In spite

of their expectations of sense of belonging and acceptance based on shared ancestral origin, return migrants in these studies encountered various discriminations and prejudices in their ethnic homelands and accordingly, their identities went through changes. The representative example is the case of Japanese Brazilian return migrants (Tsuda, 2003). Japanese Brazilians are called 'nikkeijin' in Japan and were recruited to Japan primarily form manufacturing jobs in low-skilled industries. While many of these migrants identified strongly as Japanese in Brazil, the return to Japan and the reactions of their Japanese co-workers and larger Japanese society challenged the authenticity of their ethnic identities. Rather than being embraced into the fold, these Brazilian Japanese were often seen as foreigners and in response to the negative reactions, many chose to highlight their allegiance to Brazil in their style of dress, dance and language.

1.2.3. Previous Studies on Korean American returnees

Compared to studies on other ethnic Korean return migrants such as Korean Chinese, and Korean Japanese, studies on Korean American returnees have not received much attention from scholars. Yet, several researches were done on younger generation Korean Americans' experiences in South Korea, and the following changes in their identities, and sense of belonging.

Kim (2011) examined why Korean Americans move to South Korea, and how their perceptions of the United States and South Korea affect identity formation. As for the reasons for return, he suggest that younger generation Korean Americans relocate to Korea for the following possible reasons: 1) societal marginalization in the United States, 2) The impact of Korean pop culture 3) economic opportunities in English education business in South Korea, and aggravation of the U.S. job market caused by the Great Recession in 2007. With respect to identity formation of Korean Americans, he concluded as follows: Although Korean Americans feel that they are American, a level of marginalization and identification as outsiders influence their identities as ethnic American. Being constantly identified as Korean in the United States, Korean Americans move to South Korea

assuming that they will feel a sense of belonging in their motherland, however, upon living in South Korea, they realize that while they physically look Korean, they are culturally American, and therefore outsiders again. Eventually, this lead to confirmation of Korean American identity as being culturally more American.

Kim (2009) examined the experiences of homeland trips among younger generation Korean Americans. Her findings showed that that the later generation Korean Americans face the 'authenticity dilemma', that is, being inauthentic both in the United States and South Korea. The Korean Americans in her study struggled with 'racial foreignness' in the United States, and expected of true belongingness through their homelands. They believed that they would have racial insider status and that, accordingly, they would feel at home in a way they could not in white-dominated America. However, they were rudely awakened by their cultural foreigner status in their homeland. South Koreans' cultural discrimination against them in spite of shared bloodline was bewildering, and spurred emotions of sadness, disappointment, and anger. Kim (2009) noted that in the end, the Korean Americans respond to their otherness in both countries by differentiating between Korea the homeland, and America the home. They come to identify their home as America, a place of cultural familiarity and belonging while identifying Korea as the homeland, the place of their ethnic roots and ancestors.

Kim & Stodolska (2013) examined the impacts of travel on ethnic identity development among 1.5 generation Korean-American college students through in-depth interviews with Korean-American college students in the Midwest, USA. Their findings revealed that in general, Korean Americans either retained or reshaped their ethnic self-identification to Korean-American as a result of travel to their ethnic homeland. In their study, a number of interviewees pointed out they were labeled as 'not Korean' by native Koreans' who noticed their cultural distinctiveness and they also found native Koreans culturally foreign to them. Kim & Stodolska (2013) noted that such experiences eventually led Korean Americans to recognize themselves as foreigner both in America and in Korea, resulting in sense of 'in-betweenness', and feelings of 'neither here nor there.'

Park (2008) examined the ethnic identity formation of second generation Korean American returnees focusing on the negotiation between dominant images of Korean Americans and their self-conception, both in America and in Korea. In particular, he emphasized the role that Korean language ability plays in the returnee's identity negotiations in South Korean context. He suggested that the returnee's ethnic identities, painstakingly carved out in a racialized American context, no longer function or provide meaning in the Korean sociocultural setting. Their lack of Korean skills constantly mark them as a cultural foreigner in their ancestral homeland, as their race marginalized them as a minority in mainstream American society. As a result, the returnees find themselves as being neither entirely Korean nor entirely American, resulting in 'in-between' identity.

1.3. Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative research methodology in order to examine the experiences of Korean Americans in a daily context. The daily context here refers to individual situations which involve dynamic interactions. Qualitative research allows a researcher to directly listen to the interviewee's stories and ideas, and observe their behaviors, attitudes, and feelings (Hong, 1998). Between August, 2014 and January, 2015, I conducted in-depth interviews with 17 second generation Korean Americans residing in Seoul, South Korea. I confined the interview participants to those who were born and raised in America, and voluntarily returned to Korea individually as young adults at least 6 months ago. Interviewees were recruited through snowballing sampling, and the interview was semi-structured with open-ended questions. The average interview lasted between 60-80 minutes, and every interview was recorded and transcribed. The interview contents are mainly composed of 6 parts: 1) family background 2) ethnic identity before return 3) motive & purpose of return 4) Experiences in South Korea 5) ethnic identity after return and 6) Future plans.

The age of my interview participants ranged between 22 and 33, mostly around their mid to late 20s. 8 female and 9 male returnees participated. As for educational background, all

of them except for one received their bachelor's degree in the United States, and two persons received master's degree in the United States and Spain. The other one is currently attending a college in Seoul, South Korea. The length of stay in Korea ranged from 7 months to 5 years. As for current status, the sample was varied. Most interview participants (8 out of 17) were working in English education business, 4 were graduate students. Also, since the interview was anonymous, I gave each participant an English pseudonym. The following table illustrates the detailed information of general backgrounds among interview participant.

<Table 1> General Backgrounds of Interview Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Education	Length of Stay in Korea(Years)	Occupation/ current Status
Tim	Male	31	College	2	English instructor at an English academy
Josh	Male	29	College	4	Vice president of an English academy
Mark	Male	30	Graduate.	1.5	Lawyer
Jason	Male	27	College	0.7	Studying Korean at a Korean language center
Alex	Male	26	College	3	English instructor at an English academy
Paul	Male	26	College	4	SAT(Scholastic Aptitude Test) Instructor

Nathan	Male	30	College	5	SAT(Scholastic Aptitude Test) Instructor
Aaron	Male	26	In Graduate	2	Graduate Student
Harry	Male	26	In College	3	College Student
Kate	Female	23	In College	8 months	Staff at a restaurant
Blair	Female	33	Graduate	4	English instructor at a university
Carrie	Female	27	Graduate	4.5	Self-employed at an entertainment business
Julia	Female	27	College	4	English instructor at a public school
Jane	Female	29	College	2	Part-time English instructor / Part-time Dance instructor
Laura	Female	26	Graduate	4	Reporter at an English Broadcasting company
Sally	Female	23	In Graduate	2	Graduate Student
Ellen	Female	28	In Graduate	3	Graduate Student

II. Motives for Return Migration

This chapter examines return motives of Korean Americans. As note earlier, all of the interviewees were born and raised in United States and voluntarily decided to return to Korea as independent adults. As a result of analyzing the interviews, it was found that Korean Americans return to Korea for two major reasons. Firstly for professional motives such as finding better job opportunities or gaining higher education, and, secondly, for personal motives such as searching for ethnic roots, and exploring the cultural heritage. The interview analysis also showed that their personal motives are essentially derived from their yearnings for a more stable identity, and sense of belonging. This chapter consist of two main parts. Firstly, I will give a general picture of return motives of Korean Americans, and next, move onto in-depth illustrations of selected individuals' narratives.

2.1. Return Motives of Korean Americans

In this study, a number of interviewees said that better economic opportunities in Korea was an important factor in influencing their return decisions. Indeed, Korea is a land of opportunity for young Korean American college graduates seeking for a job. Because English skills and American degree they possess are highly valued in Korea, they have higher possibility of getting into professional jobs. Moreover, the Overseas Korean Act (1999) grants qualified Korean Americans quasi-citizenship rights such as the rights to work, prolonged stay, and property ownership, making it easier for them to come and work in Korea (Park and Chang, 2005).

If the Korean Americans graduated from top-tier universities in the US and are fluent in Korean, they would have an advantage of finding a better job. Amongst the interviewees in the interview Mark is the typical example. He graduated from one of the top law school in the US and found his first job in a famous law firm in Korea. For the reason why he chose Korea instead of the US, he answered: "*I moved here because I thought it would be a better opportunity since I can speak Korean very well and I'm also native English speaker so I felt that my skills would be demanded in Korea*"

In particular, English teacher has been most popular choice among young Korean American Americans. The demand for native English teacher is high thus it's easy to find jobs with high wage, support for plane ticket, free accommodation, and various benefits (Kim, 2012). Moreover, the financial crisis in 2008 made it hard to find jobs in the US which made the number of the second generation Korean Americans to enter the English education industry in Korea to grow (Kim, 2012). In fact, the majority of interviewees who returned for job opportunities were working as an English teacher either in School or an English institute (hagwon). For example, Blair cited the huge demand for English teachers in Korea as an important factor in influencing her return decision:

> *I got my master's in Spain and I wanted to go back there for ph.D. I wanted to get a like a teaching job at a university at an American university. So I was just here spending summer time with relatives here in Korea and then I just got a job at a hagwon(private English education institute). I don't know, at that time, European currency was really expensive I told myself "Oh I will just work and save money for a year and then go back the following year" but I didn't go back. Especially here in Korea there is no much need for Spanish but there is a huge demand for English teachers. So my dream kind of changed after coming to Korea. (Blair)*

The economic opportunities in Korea seem to be a necessary condition in facilitating their return. However, it was not a sufficient condition. Tsuda(2013) pointed out that return migration may be another form of international labor migration as it is usually instigated by economic factors. However, what it makes return migration different from general labor migration is that a sense of ethnic connection strongly affects the ethnic returnees' decision to return. In the same vein, Korean American returnees naturally turn to Korea when seeking for a job overseas because it's their ethnic homeland. Josh explained that after searching for internship opportunities in various countries, he eventually chose Korea because he is Korean:

After I graduated from college, I wanted to work in another country so I debated between China Japan Korea and Europe and back then I pursued a career in finance and I knew that Hong Kong would be a good idea but Europe was obviously bad at that time because it was when the economy went down in 2008 and 2009. So I rejected Europe but I chose Korea in the end because I'm Korean and I thought there would be a lot of options here actually. (Josh)

Although not all returnees return with strong ethnic self-consciousness as Korean as in the case of Josh, ethnicity did play an important role for their return. In the interview, none of the returnees mentioned only professional motives when reflecting upon their return decision. In addition to job opportunities in Korea, the desire to find their ethnic roots, and explore the cultural heritage was a strong motive among many returnees. These motives were particularly strong among those who came to Korea to pursue higher education. As well as their goal of learning the professional knowledge, they emphasized a desire to reconnect with ethnic heritage through return*:*

I wanted to get education abroad and because when growing up I never really new my Korean roots, so I figured, why not pursue higher education in a country where I can learn about my heritage? That's the main reason why I came to Korea. (Sally)

Basically I came to Korea to maybe kind of find my roots but at the same time to see what I can do. Like, If I cannot accomplish something different than what I did back in the state which all I did in the state was for like a couple of years just move from job to job and do a lot of sales stuff because the job market was kind of bad…And then I wanted to know more about my roots, which is, I went to a couple of places where my dad, like my ancestors kind of grew up maybe. It is Ahnsung. I've been there one time a long time ago but I don't remember so I wanted to go there again. (Tim)

2.2. Return and Ethnic Identity: Personal narratives

Paul

Paul said the primary goal of his return was to help his father who struggled with financial problems, and to meet his mother. Paul's parents had divorced and when Paul was 5 years old his mother returned to Korea. After his parents' divorce neither he met his mother nor visited Korea. He said his personal motives for return was to learn the Korean language.

He was born in LA, but moved to Las Vegas when he turned 10. Until high school, he explained that he was ashamed of his Korean background, and wanted to become an "American." In school, he was often the target of bullying because of his appearance. He was frequently called "Ching Chang Chong" by his white peers. "Ching Chang Chong" is a mockery of Chinese pronunciation used for racism. Although his root is based in Korea, his white friends didn't care whether he was Korean or Chinese. In her research on younger generations of Asian Americans, Tuan (1999) pointed out that because of their appearance, they constantly face a situation where they have to prove themselves as "Americans". Paul also had to imprint himself as "American" as a reaction to his peers' assault:

> *...I wanted to be not bullied. I wanted kids not to be like 'ching chong chang' whatever. I think from that moment, I wanted to be more American…That's when I started to think of myself as American, American American, like insisting on it…*

Min & Chung (2014) pointed out when minorities absorb the racist messages in a white-dominant society, they come to replicate the negative messages in their own minds, believing that members of their ethnic group are actually inferior to White Americans in intelligence, beauty, and other characteristics. They referred to this tendency as 'internalized racism.' Paul explained that as he continued to be subject to negative stereotypes about Asians, he started to believe them:

> *...Actually it was in high school when I started to think 'Well, Koreans have no creativity.' Like, 'Korean B-boys versus American B-boys, American B-boy, they dance but Korean B-boys, they just trick all the time because it's the only think they can do. They don't know how to dance.'...You know, part of it is, there are bunch of white kids, Hispanic kids, and other kids, they are making fun of you because, "Oh, you are Asian. You have small penis. You are good at math and the only cool thing you do is Taekwondo or Kungfu." When they keep saying this, you kind of believe it too.*

However, it's not that he didn't have any sense of Korean identity. Actually, he supported for Korea in the Olympic Games and World Cup. Although he never explicitly supported for Korea, when he heard that Korea won the games, he felt good. He was also ashamed of being unable to speak Korean like other Korean-Americans around him. He described himself as "one of the worst" Korean Americans in terms of the Korean language. He knew only some basic Korean words, and could not understand anything when he had a chance to talk to some Koreans. He constantly had the feelings of embarrassment about his poor Korean, and decided to learn Korean after he returned. In the interview, he explained to learn Korean was one of the main goals of coming to Korea:

> *I also wanted to learn Korean. I think one of the biggest reasons is a lot of shame first of all. When you are growing up as Korean, because all other gyopos are very good at Korean. I was one of the worst gyopos that I knew because I didn't speak to my parents in Korean and they spoke to me in English. So I was one of the worst. So there was a lot of shame when I was going to very Koreanized church and I had Korean friends, and when I had to call my grandfather, I didn't understand anything. I just said yes yes yes.*

In the research of Korean-Japanese returnees Kwon (2008) indicated that the later generation Korean-Japanese returnees come to Korea with the strong motivation to learn the Korean language and culture. According to her interview data, these returnees often

cited feelings of embarrassment for their poor Korean and emphasized their wish to become a more perfect Korean through complementing their lack of linguistic, and cultural knowledge. I believe that as in the case of the Korean Japanese returnees, Paul's motive to learn the Korean mirrors his wish to have a positive self-identity as Korean. Although he had to deny the Korean side of his identity to fit in mainstream culture, his poor Korean constantly disturbed him, and made him feel ashamed.

Sally

As quoted in earlier section, to pursue higher education and explore her ethnic root was Sally's main motivation for return. She was born in a Korean town in L.A. and, when she was 12, moved to another area in L.A. where there were various ethnic groups. At school, she mostly hung out with friends with different ethnic backgrounds, but had only a handful of Korean American friends. When she was young, she said she never thought about her identity. Although she was conscious of her Korean background because of her parents, she did not consider herself as Korean. Instead, she would recognize herself as Asian. She said "America is just a melting pot. But I knew I was Asian. That was a general category that I knew for sure that I'm Asian." However, as she got older, she began to be more conscious of her Korean background, and think of her ethnic identity. She shared her stories as follows:

> *When I go traveling, people always ask me "what are you?" then "Oh I'm American." But then, 'What are you really?"... Ethnically I'm Korean but I don't feel I'm Korean so I felt like, disconnected. I'm American but I look Korean but I don't know anything about Korean culture. If someone just flop me in Seoul, and say 'survive' and I could but people would misunderstand me and wonder "why don't you understand our culture?" So as I got older, I got to feel that I need to know who I am because my parents are Korean. I've seen a lot of second generation Korean Americans and third generation Korean Americans, they are so distant from their ancestors and their roots. They are just like any other American family but I kind of want my kids to*

have their culture.

The question "What are you really?" that Sally heard is a type of foreigner bias towards Asian Americans. In her empirical study, Tuan (1998) found that younger generations of Asian Americans who have lost ethnic culture were marginalized as foreigner based on their phenotype. When faced with this question, Sally felt confused about her ethnic identity. Although her ethnic root is based on Korea, she didn't feel Korean because she was not knowledgeable in the culture. As indicated in her statements above, at the moment of confusion, she felt disconnected with her culture and heritage, and this realization served as an important factor that influenced her return motive. Her narratives implies that her return motive to find roots is essentially driven by her desire to search for a more stable identity.

Aaron

> *I really wanted to live in Korea. I thought after time that, I wouldn't be able to have any chance to live in Korea again. I had many good experiences in Korea when I visited there like on a short-term basis. So I wanted to be able to experience what living in Korea on a long-term basis is going to be like, I wanted to have that chance again.*

A social scientist Russel King insists that the emotional attachment to the ancestral homeland works as a main factor for immigrants' return. Aaron's example proves this. Aaron was born and raised in a town where Korean people lived together. He explains that he lived in "a very Koreanized" environment. He spoke only Korean with his family and ate Korean food every day. Because of this he could speak Korean fluently and was accustomed to Korean culture. Also, every weekend he borrowed Korean soap operas such as "Hotelier", which was famous at that time, in a video store owned by Korean and watched it with his family. Moreover, he talked about Korean soap operas and music with his Korean-American friends in school.

His closest friends were all Korean-Americans. However, because there were some that couldn't speak a word in Korean they had to talk in English. Nevertheless, they had "strong pride" of Korea. For example, he and his friends enthusiastically supported for Korean team in Olympic Games and World Cup. Although, he and his friends never lived in Korea they regard themselves as "Koreans" instead of "Americans". Aaron thought that the experience of sharing Korean identity with the Korean-Americans in the US is their own "special experience."

> *Deep down inside, I thought I was Korean more than American. I think this is a sentiment that I share with a lot of my friends in the sense that most of my friends had never lived in Korea like me, but for example, when there is like the international events like Olympic games, or winter olympics, we always root for the Korean teams. If the Korean team ever face the U.S. team, we always rooted for the Korean team. That was also true of all my friends.*

Until he graduated high school Aaron visited Korea every year with his parents. He always looked forward to visiting Korea as trip to Korea was always a fun thing. In the interview he said that he felt the longing for those visits. All of the memories in Korea was all precious. Not only his relatives were kind to him but all the people that he met were kind and welcoming. When his peers, whom he met in church, envied him of his English ability he felt as if he became a super star. The good memories in Korea may have consciously or unconsciously affected his decision to return. However, he emphasized that what made him decide to return was the experience that he had when he lived in Korea for six months as a university student.

> *(When I took the leave of absence) I came to Korea and studied for the ELSA, which is a law school test. So I went to a private education institute in Gangnam and then I met some really close friends that I'm still really close to today….I had such a good time in Korea. I think the experience I had in Korea in college, that's what led me to decide that I want to live in Korea*

> *after I graduate from college for a long time…. That was kind of a limited experience too. I was studying for the test, the test was like a small thing I literally spent every day studying for the test with the same people but I really enjoyed being with those people...I really enjoyed studying with the people who were all Korean. (Aaron)*

As shown in his narrative above, Aaron gave a special meaning to the experience of sharing friendship with Koreans he met at the institution more than any other experiences in Korea. He kept emphasizing how it was great to be around "Koreans". This reveals that he felt sense of belonging with his Korean friends, and this played an important role in shaping his return motives. Aaron currently studies in one of the graduate schools in Seoul. For the reason why he applied for a graduate school in Korea, he said that the first reason was because he needed an excuse to get the permission from his parents for him to live in Korea, and the second reason was because he wanted to have many opportunities to make Korean friends.

III. Returning to the Ancestral Homeland: Problems and Challenges

> "Migration frequently disrupts and decenters the ethnic identities of immigrants as they are thrust into a completely different sociocultural environment (cf. Epstein 1978:100). Since ethnic identities are relationally defined through cultural contrasts with other groups, when immigrants are confronted by new ethnic groups, their former self-consciousness is challenged and problematized." (Tsuda, 2003:156)

A number of Korean American returnees returned to the ethnic homeland believing that they are Korean to some degree. As I examined in the earlier chapter, many returnees desired to reconnect with their Korean identity through exploring ethnic culture and heritage. However, data from the interview shows that their former ethnic self-consciousness as Korea was constantly challenged, and problematized upon their arrival in their ethnic homeland. In this chapter, I will describe their experiences in the ethnic homeland, and examine how these experience influence their identities, and sense of belonging.

3.1. Becoming a Stranger in the Ancestral Homeland

3.1.1. Korean American as a Cultural Foreigner

From the moment Korean Americans step off the plane, having a Korean phenotype means racially blending in Korea. Initially, most enjoy this blending in on trains and in crowds because they interpret it as being part of racial majority. However, after a brief of honeymoon period of feeling at home, Korean Americans struggle to embody authentic Koreanness. In South Korea which has celebrated it as ethnically homogenous, many Koreans think that ethnic Koreans have language ability and cultural knowledge (Kwon, 2008; Kim, 2009.) As ethnic Koreans, Korean American returnees are not the exception. However, Korean Americans often lack the linguistic and cultural proficiency required to

be considered as Korean in Korea. The discrepancy often led many interviewees to call their Koreanness into question. For example, Sally was distressed as he was frequently expected to be competent in the Korean culture by Koreans she encountered in everyday life:

> *...Even though I'm pretty fluent in Korean, I don't read and write perfectly but (Korean) people expected that I'm Korean and also expected me to know Korean history and Koreanness, like something that can't be taught unless you live here. So that was kind of hard because I'm ethnically Korean but the way I act and the way I talk isn't Korean (Sally).*

The narrative of Sally ("*that was kind of hard because I'm ethnically Korean but the way I act and the way I talk isn't Korean")* indicates that in spite of her status as racial insider, she felt like a cultural outsider in Korea. In addition, Korean Americans are often treated as a cultural foreigner particularly because of their lack of Korean skills, and accented Korean. For example, Tim said he got nervous when he had to speak Korean. When asked about the reason why, he answered as follows:

> *Tim: When I first meet you, I'm kind of nervous cause I'm kind of thinking about you're going to judge my Korean, you know.*
>
> *Kyumin: Oh, do you think Koreans judge your Korean?*
>
> *Tim: Yeah.*
>
> *Kyumin: Why?*
>
> *Tim: Because they do. My experience here was a taxi driver told me like, when I was speaking to him, like in Korean, he told me "You have to fix your bad habits." you know? Because my pronunciation was really bad I guess to him. He was like, "You are not from here. You are from LA, right?" So I got kind of offended because everybody else say "your Korean is good*

for living in the states long time." It's pretty good. But that person said you need to fix that. And then I met some other people. They first think that I'm Korean. That's the way they say "Oh you can speak Korean." And then they found out "Oh you were not born here. You were born in the States?

As indicated in his statements, he felt nervous about speaking Korean because he was treated differently from Korean right after he opened his mouth. As his experience of growing up as a racial minority was so painful, he was eager to be accepted as Korean by Koreans. He explained that he put a lot of effort into listening to Koreans, and practicing their accent. However, people noticed the difference, and commented, "Oh you try to imitate the Korean people":

...I tried to speak Korean and I tried to listen to a lot of Korean people and tried to imitate them. But people catch on "oh you try to imitate the Korean people" And then I was like "yeah." It's funny, right? They were saying that "it's not bad though but I can tell you are imitating something." (Tim)

Similarly, Paul felt distressed by reactions from local Koreans when he spoke Korean. As quoted earlier (p21), he used to feel ashamed of his inability to speak Korean and his main goal of return was to improve his Korean. However, after coming to Korea, his feelings of shame got severer. He explained that local Koreans seemed to find his deficient Korean as intolerable:

...Sometimes, they (Koreans) look at me, I look young, and they get impatient with me for not speaking Korean and then, I used to be super intimidated about it because I was like 'oh no...I can't speak Korean. I feel so sorry.' So you know, like 'Jeosonghajiman (I'm sorry' in Korean)' I kept saying Jeosonghabnida, as polite as possible. And after about one and a half years of that, I just got angry. I was just upset at some point. (Paul)

In addition, some noted that they were often criticized for speaking English in public places.

Koreans—particularly the elders-- used to yell at them for not speaking Korean on the train, and commented on the rudeness of them speaking English. For example, Laura felt that she was received with cold shoulders when she spoke in English in Korea. After a series of negative experiences, she began to stop speaking English in public:

> *Koreans are like, "if you are in Korea, you should be Korean." You know. Actually I remember people not being very kind because I was Korean American. If I speak English, they would, like, "it's very rude"…they ended up being very aggressive. Actually my husband and I, we don't speak English at all in public. Because we don't want any negative attention. We only speak Korean. (Laura)*

In addition to language and culture, what distinguishes Korean American from Korean is their foreign national origin. Just the mere fact that they were born and raised in America can mark them as a foreigner. For example, Josh said although he expected to be accepted as Korean in his ancestral homeland, he was often labeled as a foreigner in different situations, and felt rejected:

> *In America I was always told myself "Korean American" and I have Korean parents I thought that being Korean you know, people would treat me as Korean but as a Gyopo, one of the taxi drivers was like "No, you are a foreigner." I told him I'm Korean. I have Korea parents. But he was like "No, you are a foreigner." he labeled me as foreigner. I was kind of bothered by that because it feels like he was rejecting me although he could treat me as Korean. Also, Korean friends who are younger than me, sometimes they don't call me Hyung(Korean word used by Korean males to address another male older than them who they are close to) and I think it's not right because you know, if you are older, you should be respected. But they're like, "Since you are American you are cool with it, right?"…So there were times they forget that I'm Korean and I do follow Korean values because of all my roots. (Josh)*

The narratives of the returnees show that their Korean identity takes on a new meaning after return. As noted in the earlier chapter, the returnees recognized their ethnic identity as Korean mainly primarily based on shared blood-line. However, as they are encountered with Koreans who were born and raised in Korea, they come to recognize that their Koreanness is insufficient to be considered as Korean in South Korea.

3.1.2. Misunderstandings and Prejudices in Everyday Life

In addition to being excluded as a cultural foreigner, Korean American returnees find themselves being subject to certain stereotypes and prejudices in everyday life. One misconception about Korean Americans that my interviewees commonly cited was the Koreans' assumption that young Korean Americans want to show off their English skills and American background. For example, Josh related one incident in which his use of language was perceived as 'showing off' by his friend. Kate felt that the Korean society's negative perspective on Korean American is because Koreans have never been in their shoes:

> *One of my friends they got upset because I spoke English out loud in the train. I do have a loud voice. He told me that Koreans hate it when foreigners, especially gyopo speak English because, in their eyes, they think we are just trying to show off. But honestly it's more, we feel more comfortable speaking English because we can express ourselves more effectively. I think Koreans are misunderstanding. (Josh)*

> *What I heard from some Korean friends is that Korean people think that Korean Americans went to the United States because their parents are rich, and they come to Korea with a chip on their shoulder thinking they are white. But I think they don't understand how it is hard to live as a minority in the U.S. We have to talk and act the way white people do because we need to fit in. I hope Koreans understand that. (Kate)*

With respect to this, Kim (2009) suggested that the misconception about younger generation Korean Americans is fundamentally derived from the contention between South Koreans and the first generation Korean immigrants who moved to America. She noted that South Koreans who have hostile attitudes towards the 'boastful' and 'ostentatious' swagger of some Korean immigrants from America. Although South Koreans recognize that the offspring of these immigrants are not as culpable as their parents, they often assume that the children have been indoctrinated with pro-American ideology just the same.

Moreover, in South Korea, there is social stigma towards those who moved to advanced Western countries during the period of the industrialization of South Korea. Although there is a perception that the overseas Koreans are 'agent of change' who assist on South Korea's nation-building processes, they are often stigmatized as 'national traitors' who left behind their own nation for better lives (Kim, 1999). The narrative of Carrie indicates that Korean American returnees also do not escape the discourse of being national traitors. She said while living in Korea, she was faced with prejudices about her parents more often than herself:

> *When I first came to Korea, I didn't speak Korean that well and they would say 'your parents did not train you. How can you be Korean-blooded and not able to speak Korean?' They used to say a lot of things about my parents more than me. It was your parents who didn't do this, right? Your parents, sometimes they would even say my parents betrayed the country by leaving Korea. When they said that I was just be quiet and just laugh and in the back of my head this sounds really rude but I think 'you know what? My parents may not have taught me but they are living a better life than you so you have no room to talk about me and my family' so that's what I think in the back of my head. (Carrie)*

Some interviewees reported that their professional, and educational achievements were sometimes considered as something that naturally came from being Korean American. Indeed, the returnee's English skills and overseas degrees are highly valued in South Korea. Because of that, from some local Koreas' perspective, Korean American can be seen as 'better off'. However, the returnees felt upset that their personal efforts were undervalued. For example, Sally, a graduate student at one of the best universities in Korea, described her experience as follows:

> *One of my Korean friends said this to me and I was stuck out. She found out I have gotten to the Seoul National University and got angry at me. It's like, this is exactly what she said. "It just seems unfair that you got into one of the best schools just because you have the citizenship." If she had a good news, I would be really happy for her but she said "I can't be really be truly happy for you." When she said that to me, I was like oh my god. (Sally)*

Lastly, several interviewees pointed out intolerant Koreans who refuse to accept that Korean Americans are culturally different. As quoted earlier, many returnees were frequently expected, and required to be competent in the Korean language and culture. Also, their lack of Korean skills, and use of English often drew negative attention and criticism. This suggest that Korea still lacks understandings on the unusual background of Korean Americans. Julia said she felt discriminated against in Korea more often than America in this respect. She explained that Koreans seem to find it hard to accept that she is culturally more American because of her Korean phenotype:

> *Here, actually there is a common question that people ask me here. 'Didn' you face lots of discrimination in America?' I always say, my answer was 'No. Not in America. I actually face more discrimination here in Korea. Because here, I feel like I'm not Korean but I'm also not American enough here. Because when people look at me, I'm just Korean. They don't know that I'm American. And then, because my Korean is fairly fluent, they have a hard time*

accepting that I'm culturally different. So they treat me like all the other Koreans but I'm not the other Koreans. But they don't fully accept that I'm American either because I don't have blond, brown hair. (Julia)

3.1.3. Difficulties of Making Korean Friends

Data from the interview show that a good number of interviewees have experienced difficulties in having a close relationship with local Koreans, and suffered feelings of alienation in Korea. Aaron who had strong will to make Korean friends before return said that he continued to have difficulties with making friends, and ended up hanging around with foreigners. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Aaron said the good memories with Korean friends he met on his last visit to Korea played a decisive role in his return decision. However, somehow, Aaron found it hard to meet Koreans who can be friends with him. Although he tried different avenues such as going to church, he couldn't find someone he can call a close friend anywhere. This made him feel isolated, and even skeptical on his return:

I don't have many problems with living in Korea. My Korean is good enough that, like a daily life, I can just pass as a Korean. I enjoy the Korean lifestyle. The only difficulty for me is my social life…I don't have any Korean friends that I see on a daily basis. I don't get to interact with Korean friends. So that makes me feel like, I'm not living in Korea. I'm physically here, but in terms of my social life, I'm not really experiencing what Korean people experiencing on day to day life. That's really frustrating because why am I here? If I just wanted to eat Korean food and go to school, and speak English there, and talk to foreigners, then, I could, I don't have to be here. I could do that at home. I feel like I'm wasting time here. I don't want to waste time here. (Aaron)

As indicated in his narrative, Aaron considered Korean friends as a channel to explore and connect with Korea. Therefore, with no close Korean friends, he felt that he was

disconnected with Korean life, which led to sense of isolation. Jason, who came to Korea to learn the Korean language, also noted how difficult it was to have a close relationship with Koreans. He explained that he made a lot of efforts to make Korean friends in his early stage of staying as well. One of his efforts was to choose a boarding house instead of a convenient officetel in order to have more opportunities to meet Korean people. He said although he tried to approach the Koreans and become a friend with them, he was always received with cold shoulders. He eventually moved to an officetel, and began to hang around mostly with foreigners:

> *Here, I don't feel like I'm Korean…Maybe there are a lot of different issues why…so I don't have Korean friends…People who I see more often, are mostly foreigners…I've tried different avenues to meet Korean people. That's how I would practice Korean, right? For instance, I moved to a boarding house. It's very inconvenient, it's not what I want but I did it in order to somehow plug myself into Korean society. When I first got here, I tried to be very outgoing, and tried to meet people, right? I was always received with cold shoulder. I mean, there can be a lot of different issues why but the result is all the same. (Jason)*

Friendship circle is one of the common ways that individuals recognize their identities. (Breton, Isajiw, Kalbach& Reitz, 1990)**.** The narrative of Jason ("*Here, I don't feel like I'm Korean…Maybe there are a lot of different issues why…so I don't have Korean friends…People who I see more often, are mostly foreigners…"*) also reveal that his self-identity as Korean faded as he didn't have his friendship circle with Koreans. In case of Paul, he said that although he wanted to make Korean friends, he ended up with foreign friends because they were much easier to access than Koreans. He recognized that a personal connection such as alumnus is a primary source for a network of friends in Korea. Therefore, as someone with no such a personal connection, he felt that it's hard to reach out and meet Koreans:

Because when I first came to Korea, my only resources, I didn't have middle school friends, I didn't have high school friends. I only have my few Korean friends that I met in America but most of them are busy doing other things. So I have, like, no access, you know, so the only way I make friends is through like the foreigner circles, you know, there is no way for me to make Korean friends...except that if I do, I don't know, like language exchange or if I go through some sort of program maybe I can meet some Korean. But basically I have to just meet foreigners because they are way easier to meet… It would have been nice if Korean society is easy to get into. I mean, it's hard to get into Korean society if you don't have those friends. (Paul)

However, as Paul mentioned above, there are still ways for Korean Americans to become a friend with Koreans without connections in Korea. Indeed, many returnees said they have participated in a language exchange or social club in order to make Korean friends. Although their attempts were not always successful, some interviewees reported making a good Korean friend in such occasions. For example, Alex said he usually spent time with foreign friends in his early years in Korea since he didn't have occasions to meet Koreans. However, one by one, his foreign friends all left Korea, and this saddened him. As he felt the need for Korean friends, he started to participate in a language exchange program twice a week. He met a lot of Korean friends there, and could improve his Korean skills and learn more about Korean culture:

…I go to language exchange twice a week from the last year, I think, going longer than anyone else there and I've met so many Korean friends through the language exchange. So they get to learn my English and I help them with their English stuff and there's some time for me to practice speaking Korean with my Korean teacher. After that for two hours, in the team, there is a different topic like international marriage, or bucket list, you know, simple things and then they practice English and I correct them. For me, I can get their perspective and they can practice speaking English talking about

different topics. (Alex)

3.2. Cultural Experiences in the Ancestral Homeland

So far, I have examined Korean American returnee's experiences in South Korea within the theme of social interactions with local Koreans. The findings show that the experiences of being treated as an outsider in the ancestral homeland made a profound impact on weakening their previously held ethnic self-consciousness as Korean. However, the shift in ethnic identity from an initially stronger Korean consciousness to a weaker one is not only the result of ethnic exclusion they felt in the ethnic homeland. Ethnic identity is constructed by not only ethnic designations of outsiders but also self-recognition of individuals who have the qualities that distinguish them from mainstream society (Tsuda, 2003).

The interview analysis showed that Korean Americans' previously held ethnic self-consciousness as Korean is weakened after returning to Korea not only because local Koreans see them as ethnic and cultural outsiders but also because they see local Koreans culturally different either. Similarly, in her qualitative research on second generation Korean Americans who tripped to South Korea, Kim (2009) suggested that "not only do local Koreans see Korean Americans as culturally foreign, but Korean American see the ethnic homeland as culturally foreign as well." (p.312)

In this chapter, I will examine the experiences of negotiating identities among Korean American returnees focusing on their cultural experiences in South Korea. As a result of analyzing their narratives, it was found that the cultural experiences in South Korea influenced their ethnic identities and formerly developed perspectives on the ethnic homeland.

3.2.1. Cultural Differences

Korean Americans come to experience various cultural differences as they leave the home country where they were born and raised, and are thrust into new cultural environment. Tsuda (2003) noted that immigrants commonly experience the resurgence of national

identity in the mainstream society. In the home country, individuals do not notice cultural distinctiveness of their behaviors because these are socially shared by other members of the society. However, when they migrate to a new country and are exposed to a new cultural environment, they become aware of their cultural distinctiveness which contrast with the mainstream society. Many interviewees in this study also explained that after returning to Korea, they realized that they are culturally different from local Koreans. In case of Paul, for example, he could notice the obvious difference compared to his Korean coworkers:

> *I can live here comfortably. Now I have enough language ability that if I want something done, I can research it, I can get what I want. But I don't think I assimilated well into Korean culture. I think I'm still an outsider as far as Korean culture goes. Like, the way I act and think is really different from Koreans…For example, when I go to dinner with my (Korean) coworkers, I'm still different. They treat me really nicely. They treat me really well but I'm not the same. (Paul)*

Many returnees, not unlike the case of Paul, realize that they are not the same as local Koreans in cultural aspects. Many interviewees said that their certain behaviors and way of thinking which are normative in America are culturally foreign in the ethnic homeland. For Paul, as presented in his statements above, such realization made him feel like a cultural outsider, not assimilated into the mainstream Korean culture. In addition, interestingly, the experiences of cultural difference led a good number of interviewees to call into question not only their own, but also their parent's Koreanness in a way which did not exist in America. They commonly noted that after returning to Korea, they realized that their parents, whom they have always considered traditional, and conservative Korean, are much more Americanized than they ever thought:

> *…. My mom was always conservative and she raised me that way. But in terms of what to say and what not to say, I learned that from here because it's very different from Korean parents in America. So that's what I realized. I*

realized that Korean parents in America, the ones who immigrated, they became more Americanized. So their value changed. So it's not something that they teach you 'oh you have to act this way in Korea' you know? They don't raise you like that. So these values these things that I learned, I learned in Korea. (Josh)

My dad's friend is very Korean. He went to college in American and lived here for a long time. My dad, when I look at him, he's very Korean, not very American. He doesn't have many American friends. He hangs out mostly with Korean people. But my dad's friend, when I saw him last time, he said 'No. Your dad is very American.'" So in the spectrum, if here is Korea, if here is America, my dad's here, I'm here and this is Korea. The difference of culture between actual Koreans and me is big. (Jason)

In addition, having to adjust former values and beliefs to certain cultural norms and values of Korea was stressful experience for many Korean Americans. First of all, a number of interviewees found it hard to adapt to Korean working environment. From their perspectives, hierarchy system within their workplace was too rigid, unconditional obedience to seniors was required, and individual's privacy and opinions were often ignored. For example, Alex worked at a public high school and found it difficult to adapt to the hierarchy system in which he couldn't freely express his ideas and opinions. He explained:

In the workplace, honestly, I should try harder to adapt a little more, so sometimes I feel myself being soft. But then, I don't want to be like that because deep down inside, that's like me, my personality plus American culture, being strong, don't let people walk over you, be strong about your opinion but in Korean workplace usually if someone bugs you, you just listen. You don't push back. It's really bad if you do that, right? So like, sometimes I would feel myself changing being softer but part of me I really

hate doing because I want to say 'It's not right. It's not fair.' But in Korea that's not the way it is because you know in Korea, in workplace if something is not fair, you have to endure, don't complain, that's not good. Just try harder. (Alex)

The statements of Alex indicate that he felt inner conflict between the pressure to conform to the mainstream culture and his American values and beliefs. Alex said that he never put into practice his desire to resist against rigid hierarchy at his workplace. However, he felt frustrated that he could not be who he really is. Also, female interviewees were deeply disturbed by patriarchal gender norms, which was a concern that male rarely mentioned. They often found themselves under the pressures of living up to the expectations of South Korean femininity and restrictive gender norms. For instance, Jane explained:

A lot of people, they jokingly say "You are almost 30. You should get married before your value goes down." I think people really think like after women become 30, there is no body around them, no guys will look at them. For me, 30 is really young in America. People really don't get married before 30 I mean some people do but there is no pressure. But here, there is much more pressure…sometimes, some friends tell me that my personality is too strong, too outgoing. (Jane)

In addition, a number of interviewees felt that local Koreans stepped into their personal space too much. As noted in the previous section, having a close relationship and making friends with some local Koreans was considered to be a positive aspect of their life in Korea and certainly what they wanted to achieve by returning to their homeland. However, some returnees exhibited frustration over being scrutinized by local Koreans. For instance, Carrie explained that she feels frustrated about sharing all of her private life when they ask very personal questions without any hesitation:

I think, the frustrations with Korean people, I think they get too much personal too fast. As an American, we always say we like to have our own

personal bubble but Koreans are really quick to ask questions like, how old are you? How much money do you make? What do you do? What do your parents do? And honestly in the U.S these aren't questions you normally ask people in the beginning because they can be very personal. Those are the daily type of things when you meet someone that can be uncomfortable. (Carrie)

What is noteworthy in the statements of the interviewees quoted above is that their criticism took the form of comparison between Korea and America, and they associated themselves with America while referring to local Koreans as "Koreans" or "Korean people." No matter whether the language choice may have been conscious or not, it indicates that they felt American when it came to cultural differences. This tendency is paralleled by Lee (2013)'s research on female Korean American return migrants. Her findings show that as a resistance against Korea's patriarchal gender norms, the female returnees straddle a strict line between Korean women and themselves, and identify themselves with American.

3.2.2. Changes in the Perceptions of the Ethnic Homeland

Lastly, the interview analysis shows that Korean American returnees undergo changes in their former perceptions of the ethnic homeland after returning to Korea. As noted before, many interviewees had a positive, or even romanticized view of the ethnic homeland before return and it was partly due to the fragmentary experiences such as short-term homecoming experience, watching Korean TV shows and listening to Korean music. Also, finding roots through experiencing "true" Korea was primary or supplementary goal of their return. However, as they spent time in South Korea, they came to recognize the negative character of Korean society and culture, and as a result, their positive, or idealized image of their ancestral homeland was seriously challenged.

In the interview, many returnees were critical of various aspects of Korean society and culture based on their personal experiences and observations. To begin with, the majority of the interviewees became disillusioned at the over-crowded, competitive, and

materialistic character of Seoul. Also, as noted in the earlier section, a number of interviewees cited the rigid, and hierarchical structure in Korean workplace as intolerable. Moreover, some expressed disappointment over the "selfish" and "aggressive" behaviors of local Koreans such as cutting in line or forcefully bumping each other and some others described local Koreans as "cold" and "closed-up" for their unwillingness to interact with strangers.

In case of Sally, for example, her main goal of coming to Korea was to find her roots through experiencing heritage culture. However, she explained that the actual way of life in Korea was competitive, and materialistic:

> *Here everyone is in a big hurry…It's like everything is a step...Someone next to me is learning four languages, oh I have to learn Chinese. Everything is kind of like very competitive.*
>
> *In America, when I go out to the supermarket, I don't dress up and no one is going to say anything to you but here I've been more conscious about how I have to present myself. In America, I never felt I was much pressured as I do here to present you in a certain way. (Sally)*

The statement of Sally above is indicative of the changes in her former perceptions of the ethnic homeland. She visited Korea twice when she was young. Because she only visited small cities at the times, in her memories, Korea was a traditional country. Based on her past memories, she expected to learn more about her roots through experiencing "traditional" sides of the ethnic homeland. However, about 2 years later, she became disillusioned at the fast-paced, competitive, and materialistic character of life style in Seoul. Also, Laura, who came to Korea on the advice of her parents, explained that her overall experiences in the ethnic homeland fell short of her expectations. For example, she cited "selfish" local Koreans who do not conform to queues in public places as disappointing. She explained:

> *I think the sense from being ethnically Korean, I had like really high expectations for my people in a sense, right? Because I had this high expectation, in the end, a lot of these expectations weren't reached. So, I ended up being really disappointed. Like, feeling like Korean people are really selfish. That's kind of one generalization I have. Things like, everyone's time is more valuable than the next person. Just a couple of minutes ago, I was getting my coffee and waiting in line, somebody had caught in line. Little things like that. That made me think people kind of value themselves first. (Laura)*

In another case, Carrie had a romanticized view of the ethnic homeland before return. In college, she visited Korea for traveling and "fell in love with" the homeland because of the historic relics she visited and "kind" local Koreans she met there. About four and a half years of living in Korea, however, she was highly critical of Korea and local Koreans. The following statement is her response when I asked her, "What do you think of Korea now?"

> *…Oh this is so hard. I do love Korea but I think Koreans are very close-minded people. They try to be open-minded but in reality, everything that they do, is just a copy of someone else or they want to be someone else…I think money is the number one thing in this country because money is number one, you see people, I don't know, they are just selfish people. I think that's my opinion they are selfish and greedy and at the end of the day all they care about is money because in this country as long as you have money, you can do anything you want. That's the same about other countries but Korea, I don't know, maybe the business has got into me a little bit too much but I've seen too much lying, sabotage, a lot of corruption. (Carrie)*

Lastly, Tim, who came to Korea in order to find better job opportunities and learn about his ethnic roots, came to have a negative view of the ethnic homeland, and local Koreans. The following statement is his response when I asked him about what cultural differences he

experienced in Korea:

> *Everything is fast here. It is super-fast here, like everything you have to be quick you know you have to notice stuff quickly. That's the thing, like, if you don't catch on quick, they just leave you behind…Another cultural difference was the attitude. It is kind of different, like, a lot of people are kind of fake. Korean, like, especially Seoul people they are really fake. They always try to take advantage of you. Also, they hide stuff. For example, they always talk behind your back no matter what. In the states, if somebody has something to say they talk to your face. They say something to your face like that. In here, they act nice to you and then talk behind you. (Tim)*

It is far from rare that ethnic return migrants wake up from the illusions of the ethnic homeland after return. For example, it is reported that Greek American returnees become disillusioned, and disappointed to find that Greek, Greeks and way of life in Greece are not as 'pure' as expected after returning to Greece (Christou, 2006). However, it should be noted that not everything the returnees find in Korea is negative. Some commented that Koreans are warm-hearted, and energetic, and life in Korea is fun, and dynamic. Others explained that in spite of the materialistic character of Seoul, they were proud of Korea's rapid economic development.

IV. Renegotiating Identities

Lastly, I will examine how the experiences in South Korea affected the self-perception of ethnic identities among the returnees. As we have examined so far, the returnees go through unexpected difficulties and challenges in everyday life, and their former ethnic identity as Korean becomes challenged and problematized. As a result of analyzing interviews, it was found that Korean Americans reconfirm their identity as Korean American (Chaemigyopo) identity through return experiences. However, the returnees expressed diverse feelings and ideas about their re-recognized 'Korean American' identities. Thus, in this chapter, I will analyze how the returnees come to reaffirm Korean American identity through return migration, and then describe the diverse ways that the returnees make sense of their own identities.

4.1. Reaffirmation of 'Korean American' Identity

Many Korean American returnees assumed their identity as a minority while growing up in the racialized American society. They experienced subtle forms of prejudices in everyday life, and realized that they don't belong to mainstream. However, they also realized that they are not the like Koreans either. As mentioned in chapter 3, the returnee's self-identity as Korean was seriously challenged and problematized by the restrictive standard of 'true' Koreanness in the ethnic homeland. The returnee's lack of proficiency in the Korean language, unfamiliarity with Korean culture, and foreign national origin revealed their foreignness, and thus, made it hard for them to be accepted as true Korean. As a result, a number of interviewees recognized that they don't fully belong to either America or Korea:

> *I don't think most gyopos are trying to settle down because, I remember reading a lot about Korea before I came here. I read so many different people's stories, especially gyopos' stories, what it was like to be a gyopo in Korea. I feel like, you know, this is totally made up percentage. I feel like more than 90 percent cannot stay here. They feel like they can't stay here. Like, in*

the U.S, yeah, that's true. We are minority. We are never one hundred percent accepted. But when you come to Korea, it is worse. No one accepts us as true Koreans no matter how hard we try. We will never be true Korean. (Alex)

I mean, I guess the hardest thing is, in America, I don't think I'm a hundred percent American. I'm still a child of an immigrant and in Korea, I'm not a hundred percent Korean. That's really, I guess, that's clear to me… I now understand what it means to be Korean so I will never be fully Korean. I accept that and I'm fine with that. (Jason)

I said deep down inside when I was younger, I thought I was Korean. My biggest realization is that, this is not a just simple thing, there are many meanings behind this. Now I genuinely believe that I'm not Korean, one hundred percent. I just happened to have Korean parents, I just happened to speak Korean pretty well, I happened to know a little, unimportant things about Korean culture…I think it is definitely hard to truly become Korean if you don't live here. Even for me, I thought I was special compared to the other Korean Americans. I thought I was like, kind of ahead of them in terms of Koreanness. But that's not true. I'm just the same as any other Gyopos. (Aaron)

As shown in the statements above, Korean American returnees came to realize their 'in-between' position, being neither fully American nor Korean through their experiences in both American and Korea. For the majority of interviewees, this realization led to reaffirming their Korean American identity. This finding is partly paralleled by some previous studies. For example, on their work on 1.5 generations of Korean Americans who traveled to the ethnic homeland, Kim & Stodolska (2013) reported that their experiences in the ancestral homeland resulted in a sense of "in-betweenness, lack of belonging and a feeling that you are 'neither here nor there' typical to many modern migrants" (p 203). Similarly, Park (2008) pointed out that second generation Korean American returnees come

to develop "in-between" identity that exist between cultures after returning to South Korea (Park 2008;).

Also, re-recognizing in-between identity through return migration is not the only case for Korean American returnees. In her work on the third and fourth generation Korean Japanese returnees who grew up in Japan as an ethnic minority, Kwon (2008) suggested that although many Korean Japanese returnees return to the ethnic homeland believing that they are Korean, they realize that they can't be Korean either and eventually admit their identity as Chaeilgyopo, being neither Japanese nor Korean, or both.

However, it should be noted that ethnic identity of the returnees was shaped not only by the messages they received from local Koreans about their ethnic membership but also their understanding of their own values and cultural affiliations. As indicated in chapter 3, Korean American returnees began to notice their distinctiveness when exposed to Korean culture. Moreover, finding the negative character of Korean society and culture constantly challenged their Korean identity. Indeed, a good number of interviewees said that although they still consider themselves as ethnically Korean, they don't feel Korean in cultural aspects. In case of Sally, quoted several times in chapter 3, she felt that she can't be Korean due to the materialistic character of local Koreans. Also, Paul explained that although Korean is part of his identity, his personality is far from Korean:

> *I realized no matter how much I try, I can't be Korean because of cultural difference. Things they value are different than things that I value. I can't generalize but from what I have seen, people are very focused on financial stability. A lot of girls that I met date guys because of their financial security even if they don't really like him. (Sally)*

> *I'm Korean American because it is true. I'm Korean ethnicity and American nationality. But as far as like my personal identity goes, Korean identity is ranked, I don't know, 8 or 10 or 20 in my list of self-description. (Paul)*

It is not unusual that ethnic return migrants' self-identity based on their ethnic heritage becomes problematic and shaken after they return to their ethnic homeland (Kwon, 2008). In case of Japanese Brazilian return migrants, for example, it is reported that their self-identity moves from Japanese to Brazilian as they spend time in Japan. Tsuda (2003) noted that the Japanese Brazilians come to identify more strongly with Brazilian as a way of ethnic resistance against social alienation, and discrimination, and the cultural assimilationist pressure by Japanese society. (Tsuda, 2003). However, unlike the case of Japanese Brazilian returnees, the negative experiences in the ethnic homeland did not lead to strengthened identification with America among Korean American returnees.

Why Korean American returnees did not concede their Korean identity in spite of numerous challenges they were faced with during return experiences? There can be different reasons why. As mentioned above, the past experiences of racial discrimination and prejudice in America might have made them reluctant to identify with American. However, what was clear in the statements of many interviewees was that they were still deeply attached to their ethnic homeland:

> *I don't consider myself as a Korean. But during either Olympics or the Worldcup, I feel something different and I find myself passionately rooting for the Korean national team. Although I would hate to admit, things like that makes me Korean and I know I try hard to deny it. It is because I feel like the moment I admit it, I have to live in Korea and live under Korean cultures and stuff, which ultimately gives me no chances to be excused. You know what I mean? Like I can't deny Korean cultures. I can't deny myself not being able to speak the language. (Kate)*

> *I love Korea the way I love the U.S…because there are so many things about the U.S. that I hate. There are so many things about American people that bother me, and same thing about Korea. It's like my brother. I hate my brother but I love my brother. I can't fully explain why I love it. It's always easy to say*

something that you hate than you love. That's kind of what I have. (Carrie)

4.2. Being In-between: Perspectives on the Self

In the earlier section, I suggested that through return migration, the majority of Korean American returnees realize that their 'in-between' position that does not fully belonging to either Korea or America and come to reaffirm their Korean American identity. However, the interview analysis shows that the returnees have different perspectives on their re-recognized Korean American identity. For some interviewees, being in-between—neither here nor there—was a stressful, and frustrating experience. For example, Kate said he wished he had been "pure" Korean or American in the first place. :

> *Korean Americans get picked on everywhere they go. We are not considered as Americans in the States and we are also not considered as Koreans in Korea. I envy those pure ones. You know? The pure Koreans and the pure Americans…I just really hate to be non-pure person…because we are always considered as minorities wherever we go. (Kate)*

However, being in-between is not always experienced as marginal. Many interviewees commented that although they are not fully accepted as either American or Korean, they can control and choose identities to their benefit depending on different situations. For example, Mark said that Korean Americans can be in any environment they want as long as they are knowledgeable in the Korean language and culture to some degree:

> *I know that when non-Korean foreigners look at gyopos, they are like "Situation is so much better for you because you look Korean so you can blend in. But then, when you want to be a foreigner, you can be a foreigner. As long as our language skills let us and how open we are culturally and how much we understand the culture and tradition, depending on that, if we understand it, we can be in any environment we want. (Mark)*

Moreover, a good number of interviewees saw 'Korean American' identity as something

beneficial, and distinct from Korean based on cultural capital they possess--such as English skills, overseas degrees, and cultural background--which are all considered valuable assets in South Korea. For example, Jane explained that being Korean American is more beneficial than being Korean in this respect. Also, Carrie, self-employed in entertainment business, explained that her Korean American identity allowed her to be better accepted than regular foreigners in Korea, and become more successful in her business:

> *Korean Americans have more benefits. Because I can basically do whatever I want here. If I polish my Korean skills a bit more, I can just get into any company I want. I mean there are many Koreans who speak English pretty well but I have lived in many different places so I think I'm more experienced and like if things don't work out here, I can just go somewhere else…but like if you were born and raised in Korea, it's really difficult to even think of getting a job or something overseas like in the States or Europe. You know? (Jane)*

> *Being Korean American has more advantage than just a regular foreigner…if there is a white person who speaks Korean much better than me, and we both go into the same store to get a service, I guarantee they will still talk to me more comfortably than the white person…Even in the business world, being Korean American actually helps me. People like that I'm American. They think because I have an American mind frame that for some reason, I would be able to contribute something to be very, that will be very successful in Korea. (Carrie)*

Lastly, it is noteworthy that although my interviewees believed that they will never be fully accepted as Korean in the ethnic homeland, this did not always entail abandoning attempt to become more Korean. This is probably another potential reason why they were reluctant to concede their Korean identity. For instance, although John admitted his identity as 'gyopo' as quoted in the earlier section, he still believed that he could become "more and

more Korean":

> *I feel like somewhat, I definitely find myself not accepted…I think just because I lived the most formative years of my life in the states, I think that makes me not Korean. But I don't think that means that I will never be Korean. I think I have a chance. This is the way I see. I think I have a chance to become more and more Korean. But it is very hard to take that chance. (Aaron)*

V. Conclusion

5.1. Summary

So far, this study have explored the experiences of Korean American return migrants who have returned to their ancestral homeland. To be specific, I have examined their motives for return, experiences in South Korea, and how the experiences influence their identities, and sense of belonging. Data from the interviews with 17 second generation Korean Americans residing in Korea revealed that their ethnic identity and sense of belonging were constantly challenged, and renegotiated through their return migration. The major findings of this study are as follows:

First of all, this study have examined motives for return among Korean Americans. In this study, all of my interviewees were born and raised in America, and voluntarily returned to the ancestral homeland as an independent adult. As a result of analyzing interviews, it was found that they returned to Korea for two major reasons: professional motives such as finding better job opportunities or gaining higher education, and, personal motives such as searching for ethnic roots, explore the cultural heritage, and learning the Korean language. For many interviewees, economic opportunities, and opportunities for higher education in Korea were a necessary but not a sufficient condition for their return. In addition to seeking for practical opportunities in Korea, all of them desired to reconnect with ethnic heritage through return migration. Also, the personal narratives of my interviewees revealed that their personal motives are essentially associated with their longings for a more stable identity, and sense of belonging, which had been gradually developed through the experiences of growing up as a minority in the United States.

After exploring the multiple motives for Korean Americans to return to Korea, the author had the privilege to listen to a series of experiences they actually had in South Korea. Their narratives indicated that although they came to their ancestral homeland believing that they are ethnic Korean, their former ethnic self-consciousness as Korean was challenged and problematized in a new sociocultural environment of Korea.

First of all, I have examined the return experiences of Korean Americans within the theme of 'becoming a stranger in the ancestral homeland'. In South Korea, which has been a homogenous country throughout history, it is assumed that linguistic and cultural competencies are inherent in the blood of the Korean who has lived in the Korean peninsula (Kwon, 2008.) However, since they were born and raised in a foreign country, Korean Americans lack such linguistic, and cultural proficiency necessary for acceptance as co-ethnics as Korean in South Korea. Therefore, a number of interviewees were often ethnically excluded as a culturally different stranger in their ancestral homeland. In spite of their shared blood-line, their ethnic heritage was challenged, and denied on cultural grounds, mainly because of their inability to speak fluent Korean, and lack of cultural knowledge.

Furthermore, in everyday life, Korean American returnees faced certain stereotypes and prejudices, mainly attributed to Koreans' nationalist sentiment. This findings suggest that although Korean Americans are often assumed to be better received by Korean society due to the high national status of America (Seol& Skrentny, 2009) they are not entirely free from exclusion, and prejudices. Data from the interviews also revealed that a good number of interviewees had difficulties of having a close relationship with Koreans. In the absence of Korean friends, they suffered loneliness, and sense of alienation in their ancestral homeland.

Next, I have explored the cultural experiences of Korean American returnees within the theme of 'cultural experiences in the ancestral homeland.' As my interviewees experienced various cultural differences, they realized their own cultural distinctiveness in contrast to Koreans who were born and raised in South Korea. This realization often led them to call their, or their parents' Koreanness into question. In addition, they struggled to adjust their American values, and beliefs to new cultural environment in Korea. During the interview, many interviewees displayed a tendency to criticize certain character of Korean culture through comparison between Korea, and America, and identify themselves with American. This result indicates that Korean Americans felt American when it came to cultural

differences.

Furthermore, the interview analysis showed that Korean American returnees undergo changes in their former perceptions of the ethnic homeland after returning to Korea. As they spent time in South Korea, they came to recognize the negative character of Korean society and culture such as the materialistic character of life style in Seoul. Because many interviewees had positive image of their ancestral homeland before return, this experience led to feelings of disappointment, and disillusionment, and thus, their positive, or idealized image of their ancestral homeland was seriously challenged.

Lastly, this study examined how Korean American returnees come to renegotiate their identities through the experiences in the ethnic homeland. Many Korean American returnees assumed their identity as a minority while growing up in the racialized American society. They experienced subtle forms of prejudices in everyday life, and realized that they don't belong to mainstream. However, they also realized that they are not the like Koreans either through return migration. It was found that many interviewees realized their 'in-between' status, being neither fully American nor Korean, and eventually re-recognized their identity as Korean American. What is noteworthy is that in spite of negative experiences in their ancestral homeland, all of the interviewees did not strengthen identification with American. Although there may be different issues why, data from the interviews suggest that Korean American returnees were still deeply attached to their ethnic heritage. Furthermore, the way the returnees understood and felt about their re-recognized Korean Ammerican identity varied. For some interviewees, being unable to fully belong to either way was frustrating experience. On the other hand, many others recognized their Korean American identity as something special, positive, and advantageous.

5.2. Limitations and Implications

Although these conclusions represent my findings to the best of my ability to examine the experiences of second generation Korean American return migrants, I should note that there were limitations in this study. First of all, because this study relied on the narratives of 17

interviewees, the findings may not represent the experiences of every Korean American returnees. Furthermore, as interviewees were selected by snowballing sampling, there may have been a sampling bias such as educational level, socioeconomic status, occupation and region. All of my interviewees are highly educated, and most of them described themselves as a middle-class Korean Americans. The majority of my interviewees were engaged in English education business or pursuing higher education in Seoul, South Korea. The experiences of Korean Americans pursuing other careers, or living in other parts of South Korea may be completely different from my interview sample.

However, this study has significance for several reasons. First of all, it expanded the body of work on Korean American return migrants, who received relatively little attention compared to Korean Chinese and Korean Japanese returnees within return migration studies in South Korea. Second of all, this study examined the motivations for return among Korean American returnees, the theme that has not been adequately discussed in previous researches. Lastly, this study provided a lens through which we can contemplate the perception, and reception of Korean society for Korean Americans.

I conclude this study by addressing the story of Jason who came back to the United States after living in South Korea for 9 months. Through his experience of living in South Korea, he realized that he was an outsider in his ancestral homeland as he was in the American society, and accepted his identity as a Korean American. In the interview, he said being unable to feel complete sense of belonging sometimes saddened him. 3 months after he returned back to the United States, however, he contacted me saying that he is now truly happy with being Korean American because it allows him to have the best of both worlds, and be unique. Also, he said he misses the time he spent in Korea, and plans to come to Korea for his winter vacation this year. This raises the question of how Korean Americans' identities are changed again after return to the United States. Therefore, it is my hope that further research is carried out on Korean Americans who returned from South Korea, and how their identities are reshaped again in the United States.

References

Primary Source

재외동포재단(2013), 2013년도 재외동포에 대한 국민인식조사

동아시아연구원(2010), 한국인의 정체성 조사

Korean Literature

권숙인 (2008).「디아스포라 재일한인의 귀환: 한국에서의 경험과 정체성」.『국제·지역연구』17집 4호. pp. 33-60.

박상현(2008).「한국에 거주하는 한국계 미국인 2세의 종족 정체성 형성 연구」. 서울대학교 국제학과 석사학위논문.

윤인진(2012).「디아스포라와 초국가주의의 고전 및 현대연구 검토」.『재외한인연구』28집. Pp 7-47

Mason, J. (2010).「질적 연구방법론(김두섭 옮김)」. 서울: 나님. 원서출판: 2002, Qualitative Researching 2nd edition.

윤인진 & 송영호 (2011).「한국인의 국민정체성에 대한 인식과 다문화 수용성」.『통일문제연구』23집 1호. pp. 143-192.

김병철 (1999).「김영삼 정부의 재외동포정책에 관한 연구: 이중국적허용 논의를 중심으로」『재외한인학회』. 8집 12호. PP. 317-358

English Literature

Barth, F. (1969). *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. London: Allen & Unwin

Basu, P. (2001). "Hunting down home: Hunting down home: Reflections on homeland and the search for identity in the Scottish diasporas." in B. Bender & M. Winer, Eds. *Contested landscapes: Movement, exile and place,* Oxford, UK: Berg. pp. 333-348.

Breton, R, Isajiw, W. W., Kallbach,W. E, & Reitz, J. G. (1990), *Ethnic Identity and Equality: Varieties of Experience in a Canadian City.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Christou, A. (2006). "Deciphering Diaspora – Translating Transnationalism: Family Dynamics, Identity Constructions and the Legacy of 'Home' in Second-Generation Greek-American Return Migration." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29(6). pp. 1040-1056.

Christou. A. (2006). "American Dreams and European Nightmares: Experiences and Polemics of Second Generation Greek American Returning Migrants." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.* 32(5) pp. 831-845

Cornell, S & Douglas, H. (2007). *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World.* London: Pine Forge Press.

Geertz, C. J. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures.* New York: Basic Books.

Isaacs, H. R. (1975). "Basic Group Identity: the Idols of the Tribe." In N. Glazer and D.P. Moynihan, Eds. *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. pp. 29-52.

Jain, S. (2013). "For love and money: second-generation Indian-American 'return' to India." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36(5). pp. 896-914.

Jenkins, R. (2004). *Social Identity* (2nd edn.), London: Routledge

Kibria N. (2002). “Of blood, belonging and homeland trips: transnationalism and identity among second-generation Chinese and Korean Americans.” In Levitt P, Waters MC, Eds. *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*, Russell Sage: New York. pp. 295-311

Kibria, N. (2000), “Race, Ethnic Options, and Ethnic Binds: Identity Negotiations of Second-generation Chinese and Korean Americans.” *Sociological Perspectives* 43(1). pp. 77-95.

Kibria, N. (2002a). *Becoming Asian American: Second-generation Chinese and Korean American identities.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kim J. & Stodolska M. (2013). “Impacts of Diaspora a Travel on Ethnic Identity Development among 1.5 generation Korean-American College Students. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change.* 11(3). pp. 187-207.

Kim J. (2010). “Transnational Identity Formation of Second-Generation Korean-Americans Living in Korea.” *Torch Trinity Journal* 13. pp. 70-82

Kim, B. (2012). “Caught in the in-between**:** Negotiating Korean American Identity in South Korea.” University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved from http://210.101.116.28/W_files/kiss61/1h800423_pv.pdf

Kim, N. (2009). “Finding Our Way Home: Korean Americans, ‘Homeland’ Trips and Cultural Foreignness.” *Diasporic Homecomings: Ethnic Return Migration in Comparative Perspective*, In Tsuda, T, Eds. Stanford University Press. pp. 409-430.

King, R & Christou, A. (2008). “Cultural Geographies of Counter-diasporic Migration: The Second Generation Returns Home.” Sussex Migration Working Paper 45.

King, R. & Christou, A. (2001). “Of counter-Diaspora and Reverse Transnationalism: Return Mobilities to and from the Ancestral Homeland.” *Mobilities* 6(4) pp. 451-466

King, R. (2000). “Generalization from the history of return migration”, In B. Ghosh, Ed. *Return migration: journey of hope or despair?* Geneva: IOU and UN. pp. 7-56

Lee, H. (2013). “I’m my mother’s daughter, I’m my husband’s wife, I’m my child’s mother, I’m nothing else: Resisting Traditional Korean Roles as Korean American Working Women in Seoul, South Korea.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 36. pp. 37-43.

Maruyama, N., Weber, I. & Stronza, L. (2010). “Negotiating Identity: Experiences of Visiting Home among Chinese Americans”, *Tourism, Culture & Communication* 10. pp. 1-14

Min, P. G. & Chung, T. (2014). *Younger Generation Korean Experiences in the United States: Personal Narratives on Ethnic and Racial Identities.* Maryland: Lexington Books

Nagel, J. (1994). “Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture” *Social Problems* 41(1). pp. 152-176

Park, J.S., & Chang, P. Y. (2005). “Contention in the Construction of a Global Korean Community: The case of the Overseas Korean Act.” *The Journal of Korean Studies* 10(1). pp. 1-27.

Seol, D & Skrentny, D. (2009). “Ethnic Return Migration and Hierarchical Nationhood: Korean Chinese Foreign Workers in South Korea.” *Ethnicities* 9(2) pp. 147-174

Tsuda, T. (2003). *Strangers in the Ethnic Homeland: Japanese Brazilian Return Migration in Transnational Perspective*. NY: Columbia University Press

Tsuda, T. (2013). “When the Diaspora Returns Home: Ambivalent Encounters with the Ethnic Homeland.” In Ato Quayson & Girish Daswani, Eds. *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*. UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., pp. 172-189

Van den Berghe, P. L. (1981). *The Ethnic Phenomenon.* New York: Elsevier

Wessendorf, S. (2007). “‘Roots Migrants’: Transnationalism and ‘Return’ among Second-

Generation Italians in Switzerland", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33(7). pp. 1083-1102

Yang, P Q (2000). *Ethnic Studies: Issues and approaches*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Yetman, N. R. (1991). *Majority & minority: The dynamics of race and ethnicity in American life (5th ed.)*. Boston Allyn & Bacon.

요약(국문초록)

한국에 거주하는 재미교포의 정체성 협상 경험에 관한 연구

권규민

서울대학교 국제대학원

국제학과 국제협력전공

최근 수십 년 간 조상의 나라로 '귀환'하는 디아스포라 후손들의 수가 전세계적으로 증가면서, 이들의 삶과 정체성을 다룬 연구들이 주목을 받고 있다. 이 논문 역시도 이러한 흐름의 연장선상에서, 조상의 나라로 귀환한 재미교포의 경험을 고찰한다. 구체적으로는 미국에서 태어나고 성장한 재미교포 젊은이들이 한국에 오는 동기, 한국에서의 경험, 그리고 이러한 경험이 그들의 민족 정체성과 귀속 의식에 미치는 영향에 초점을 둔다. 이를 위해 최소한 6개월 전에 한국으로 귀환한 재미교포 2세 17명을 눈덩이 표집을 통해 모집하였고, 이들을 대상으로 반구조화된 심층인터뷰를 실시하였다. 본 논문의 연구 결과는 다음과 같다.

재미교포의 표면적인 귀환 목적은 취업과 유학이지만, 이들은 단순히 경제적/교육적 기회를 모색하기 위해 한국 행을 택하는 것은 아니다. 조국의 문화 유산을 배우고 체험하려는 욕구는 이들의 또 다른 주된 귀환 동기이며, 이러한 동기는 본질적으로는 보다 온전한 민족 정체성과 귀속에 대한 기대와 밀접히 연결되어 있다. 그러나 한국인이라는 이들의 자기 정체성과 귀속 의식은 귀환 후 심각한 도전과 문제에 직면한다. 재미교포 귀환자들은 일상에서 부족한 언어 능력과 문화적 지식으로 인해 종종 문화적인 이방인으로 배제되며, 여러 종류의 편견을 겪게 된다. 또한, 재미교포 귀환자들은 다양한 문화 차이를 경험하면서 자신들과 조국에서 자고 나란 사람들

사이의 근본적인 차이점을 인식하게 된다. 재미교포 귀환자들은 조국에서 예상치 못한 다양한 문제들에 직면하면서, 자신의 민족 정체성을 수정하거나 타협해 간다. 결과적으로 그들은 귀환 이주를 통하여 자신이 온전한 한국인이 아님을 깨닫고 '재미교포'로의 정체성을 재확인한다.

……

주제어: 귀환 이주, 민족 정체성, 재미교포 2세, 정체성 협상

학 번: 2013-22046