

THE COMPLEXITY OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION FOR KOREAN
INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

A DISSERTATION

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At the beginning of my dissertation research, I thought of this work as solely an individual project. As I proceeded through, I came to understand that my dissertation was written by all members of my communities. This particular social aspect of my dissertation project is consistent with how the research participants of this study constructed their identities through their transnational lives.

My wife 권정덕 is the first person I need to show my appreciation to. It was tough for me and my wife to live for about eight years in a foreign country. The United States is the first country I have ever been so long time for real living, not just for traveling. My wife was a wonderful kindergarten teacher and really precious daughter of her parents in Korea. But my decision to study in the U.S. had critically impacted these identities for her. She was not allowed in this country even though she had rich experiences and knowledge about child education. Also, she was not able to see her parents because of the distance and the time difference which became more difficult at certain times. Despite it all, she did her best to support my studies. When I looked unconfident of my own research, she acknowledged the value of my dissertation. When I needed time for my writing, she cared for our sons. When I worried about our financial situations during my studies, she said that we would be better in the future. Without her, I would not be able to keep my research and life going in the United States. I love her very much and, now, I need to make her happier than her past life in the United States.

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My parents-in-law cared for not only their daughter, my wife but also me. Specifically, my mother-in-law 김영자 had to visit the U.S. twice only because of caring for two newborn babies, 지훈 and 도훈. I remember that, in 2015, she took a flight alone even though it was her first visit to the U.S. It was particularly cold winter in Minnesota. Although she usually enjoyed taking walks in Korea, it was very hard for her even to go outside of my house. Also, whenever I contacted her through video, she would say that I was doing a great job. My father-in-law 권수용 also supported my studies in the U.S. while he suffered from health difficulties. I hope he gets better to see how many things I accomplish after graduation. My sisters-in-law 권정희 and 권정숙, brother-in-law 권형용, and their families 조용문, 심훈보, and 조성경 were always concerned with and supportive of me in Korea.

Finally, It was my pleasure to listen to their narratives learning the new world of Korean international undergraduate students and reflecting on my own experiences in the U.S. All of this dissertation came from the stories of my six research participants (유나, 사라, 다나, 나은, 유리, and 기호). I hope they keep constructing better identities and finding comfortable spaces across two countries.

I know this is a long acknowledgement, but I cannot avoid appreciating their warm and valuable support for my journey in the U.S. My identities are being constructed within these transnational communities.

Abstract

The research perspectives on international students' experiences have been limited. Most research tend to essentialize the identities, struggles, and experiences of international students in the United States. In particular, Asian international students in the U.S. have been represented as exotic others in research. Such studies tend to selectively rely on cultural binaries of identities. Previous research often propagates a narrative that Asian international students suffered from many adaptational challenges in a foreign country such as the U.S. because of their cultural differences. This representation resulted from making a specific connection between their old tradition and recent challenges. This interpretation misses many contexts of their identity constructions. This dissertation aims to reveal the complexity of identity constructions and disrupt the essentialized representations of Asian international students, especially Korean international students (KIS).

To achieve this aim, this study used Hall's concepts, encoding/decoding, about representation as a primary framework. This study focused on not only dominant representations about KIS as encoding but also KIS' self-representation of their identities as decoding. There were three main findings about their identity constructions in this study. First, their identities in Korea and the U.S. had specific relationships. How they were encoded in Korea, such as low achievers, promising English learners, and global sojourner, contributed to the imagination of their identities in the U.S. even though some of them did not match their lived identities in the U.S. Second, they experienced the differences of identity representations between Korea and the U.S. In Korea, a dominant discourse, *학벌주의* [hakbeoljui meaning critical emphasis on the university hierarchy]

played a critical role to define KIS' identities while race/ethnicity predominantly affected the representations of their identities in the U.S. Finally, they sought comfortable spaces for their identity constructions. KIS decided to move to the U.S. to avoid negative identity representations and/or achieve positive identity representations. Dominant discourses about their identities in Korea, such as academic achievement and English, contributed to their experiences of educational and social hierarchies. Thus, KIS began to recognize the possibilities for their more positive identities in the U.S. They found more comfortable spaces for their positive identity representations in the U.S., including Korean student music club, International Student Representative, student advising job, and Korean language and culture consultant while experiencing the separations and hierarchies in the U.S. The broad contexts of research participants' stories across two countries led to the 'layered and sutured' complexity of their identity constructions.

This study contributes to overcoming the essentialized perspectives on KIS' identities in previous studies. In particular, this dissertation maintained that KIS' identities were flexibly constructed by the interactions between their own agency, personal experiences, and dominant discourses within transnational context, rather than inherently fixed. In addition, they continued to find their own comfortable spaces for their identity constructions despite limitations based on environmental factors, such as dominant discourses and international history between Korea and the U.S.

Keywords: Korean international students (KIS), the complexity of identity constructions, transnationalism, postcolonialism, encoding/decoding, comfortable spaces

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

꽃 (김춘수)

내가 그의 이름을 불러주기 전에는
그는 다만
하나의 몸짓에 지나지 않았다.

내가 그의 이름을 불러 주었을 때
그는 나에게로 와서
꽃이 되었다.

내가 그의 이름을 불러 준 것처럼
나의 이 빛깔과 향기에 알맞은
누가 나의 이름을 불러 다오.
그에게로 가서 나도
그의 꽃이 되고 싶다.

우리들은 모두
무엇이 되고 싶다.
나는 너에게 너는 나에게
잊혀지지 않는 하나의 눈짓이 되고 싶다.

A flower (written by Chun-soo Kim)

Before I called their name,
they were nothing
more than a gesture.

When I called their name,
they came to me
and became a flower.

Like I called their name,
please call my name
that suits my own color and fragrance.
I'm also longing to come to them
and become their flower.

All of us are longing to be something.
You to me and I to you,
we're all yearning to be an unforgettable gaze.

As observed in the poem above, calling one's name is a very important activity for determining identity. In the poem, calling is not just speaking the existing names. For instance, calling someone a flower, rather than a snake, shows a viewpoint that is different from the perspective of seeing the person as a snake. Additionally, calling one's name is an action that constructs others' identities. It is an attempt to make connections between someone's identity and a meaning closely related to a name. Therefore, when we call someone "a flower," we are representing them as something meaningful to us. A caller makes an action to define an identity of the called.

About 50,000 Korean international students (KIS) were enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education in the 2019-2020 academic year (IIE, 2020). For the educational experiences of these and other Asian international students, what do U.S. universities need to be concerned with? In this dissertation, I argue that we need to examine our relationships with and understand the identities of those international students if we consider all students as meaningful subjects.

Much knowledge about KIS in relevant studies often seems to be superficial (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). KIS tend to be essentialized in those studies. They were represented as racially, culturally, and linguistically different from academic peers in their institutions even though globalization was broadly going on in the world. They tend to be viewed as markedly different at best and more frequently as culturally exotic. Furthermore, previous studies framed KIS

within the cultural binaries between Western and Eastern, like other Asian international students in the U.S. The criteria of their binarism mostly relies on Asian international students' past and ambiguous cultural traditions, such as Confucianism. Other significant factors, such as their own life histories and international relationships between Korea and the U.S., are largely disregarded when people define their identities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated confusion and discrimination towards Asian international students, such as Korean students in the U.S (Chen et al., 2020; Cheng, 2020; Lowrey, 2020). The evolving global pandemic is providing us with the opportunity to understand how people see Asians and Asian-descent communities. In their daily lives, Asians are more frequently suffering from discriminative treatment mostly because of their biological characteristics as Asian being blamed for infecting COVID-19 in the U.S. Moreover, the U.S. government had tried to implement hostile and unilateral measures to Asian international students currently studying and waiting to be enrolled in U.S. universities. This hostility embedded in everyday life and institutions in the U.S. showed how KIS were perceived and treated in the U.S.

I recognize the significance of terminology. This study focuses specifically on Korean international students. Yet, there is considerable literature that discusses "Asian" students more generally. "Asia" is ostensibly a large and incredibly diverse geographic area. At the same time, East Asian international students, such as Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese students have occupied the largest portions of international students in the U.S from Asia (IIE, 2020). These students tend to be addressed as "Asian" in research on international students despite the heterogeneity of their histories, cultures, religions, and customs. To that end, the extant literature often provides essentialized

treatments of these students based on overgeneralizations of traditional cultures and Confucianism (Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gaino, & Baden, 2005; Le & Gardner, 2010; Lin & Yi, 1997; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Yang & Clum, 1994).

While increasing numbers of international students failed to change the strong image of Korean international students in the U.S., most research about diverse Asian international students in the U.S. has been also ineffective to help people deepen their understanding about KIS (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Nilsson, Butler, Shouse, & Joshi, 2008; Rahman & Rollock, 2004; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Yang & Clum, 1994; Ye, 2005; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhang & Dixon, 2003). The most significant background of those failures could be the repetition of the essentialized assumption about KIS. The approach of differentiation or separation of KIS from Western societies will exacerbate the relationship between KIS and their instructors and academic peers in the U.S.

This study focused on the identity representations of KIS in the U.S. in order to provide deeper understanding of the ongoing construction of KIS' identity constructions. This is an alternative approach to what appears to be more superficial and essentializing representations. Listening to KIS' stories about their transnational trajectories is more helpful to identify their own meaning of living in the U.S. with respect to identity formations, rather than leaning only on previous academic discourses. While KIS certainly feel more familiar with their Korean culture and other aspects of Korean society, they are continuously constructing their identities based on their transnational lives between Korea and the U.S.

Historically, Korea has faced and adapted the imperial power of the U.S. utilizing Korea to maintain or reinforce their global power while Korea is located between the U.S. and other countries of Great Power, such as China, Russia, and Japan (Park, 2010). These postcolonial and transnational contexts of KIS have the potential to contribute to their own identity constructions. Even though the power relation between the U.S. and Korea is unequal, it is expected that their prior experiences in Korea and their agency have complicated their identity construction, rather than only being Americanized or adhering only to their prior national identities.

The Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the identity constructions of KIS based on their transnational experiences between Korea and the U.S. by listening to their narratives, rather than accepting essentialized discourses in most studies about Asian and Korean international students in Western countries. In particular, this study sought to identify the complexity of their identity constructions.

In this study, the complexity of KIS' identity constructions can be understood through four approaches on identity formation, as prescribed by Hall (1997, 2003, 2006). First, a psychological perspective was used to understand how KIS 'decoded' representations about their identities (Hall, 2006). Basically, this study focused on KIS' internal understanding about themselves more than external perspectives. Second, a sociological perspective was used to identify how others attempted to 'encode' KIS' identities (Hall, 2006). KIS' identity constructions did not happen within an isolated condition. Diverse sources of social forces tried to interrupt their identity constructions (Hall, 1986). In particular, the 'dominant discourses' about KIS within a society was

investigated in this study. Third, a cultural perspective was used to find the differences of shared beliefs about KIS' identities. A Korean international student was perceived in different ways between Korea and the U.S. The two societies had different 'dominant discourses' affecting the views on who the Korean international student is. Finally, a historical approach was used to understand KIS' identity constructions. Here, a historical approach included focusing on both research participants' personal histories and international histories between Korea and the U.S. Through an examination into KIS' personal histories, it was possible to understand the changes of their identities, and international histories supplemented us to see the meanings of learning American cultures and English during their living in the U.S. based on the imbalanced power between Korea and the U.S.

Hall's framework about identity construction included most of these four perspectives (Hall, 2003). His concepts of encoding/decoding embraced not only the Foucauldian notion about the effect of discourses on individual identities but also individual's agency in their identity construction (Hall, 2003). These were the perspectives mentioned above, including individual and sociological perspectives on their identity constructions. Actually, KIS were affected by dominant discourses within their societies (Korea and the U.S.) while they struggled with identity representations influenced by those discourses to create their own identities.

In this study, transnationalism and postcolonialism supplemented Hall's framework to better understand KIS' identity constructions and emphasize the importance of a broad viewpoint beyond current geographical and temporal boundaries. KIS' identity constructions happened not only within their domestic context but also

within the international context between Korea and the U.S. Moreover, their identities might be constructed on the basis of a specific international relationship between two countries. Especially, their personal experiences both in Korea and the U.S. contributed to the self-representations of their identities. If they stayed only in Korea throughout their lives or they were Americans traveling back and forth between two countries, they might have different self-representations about their identities.

Methodologically, this project adopted a narrative inquiry approach to examine participants' stories. The four approaches mentioned above were not able to be separated from each other. All perspectives were included in each of KIS' narratives in this study. Furthermore, this study was not tied to the perspectives on KIS prescribed by previous studies, such as linguistic and cultural deficit views. Rather, this study sought to listen to KIS' own stories to find diverse and specific knowledge about themselves. I believe that recurring exposure of the different identity representations and various approaches on KIS can contribute to challenging pre-existing perspectives about Korean and other Asian international students living in Western countries.

To investigate the complexity of KIS' identity constructions, this study was broadly guided by the following question: How did KIS construct their identities based on their transnational experiences between Korea and the U.S.? In chapter two, I describe further specific sub-questions that delved into the diverse approaches prescribed by Hall's (2006) framework and specific theoretical concepts such as encoding and decoding.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Identities of Asian International Students

Some studies about Asian and Korean international college students addressed difficulties they experienced in the United States (Choi, 2006; Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gaino & Baden, 2005; DiAngelo, 2006; Le & Gardner, 2010; Lin & Yi, 1997; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Yang & Clum, 1994). Those studies assumed that cultural differences between Asia and the United States were the main reasons for those challenges. Discourses of difficulty and difference were often based on the cultural essentialism of Asian-descent people.

Difficulty

One identity consistently represented the studies about Asian international college students in the United States was one centered on “difficulty” (Choi, 2006; Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gaino & Baden, 2005; DiAngelo, 2006; Le & Gardner, 2010; Lin & Yi, 1997; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Yang & Clum, 1994). Students were described as having many challenges, such as psychological, social, academic, and financial difficulties while those challenges resulted in and from another challenge described in the studies. In particular, counseling studies addressed many problems of Asian international students (Delgado-Romero & Wu, 2010; Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Iwamoto & Liu, 2010; Nilsson, Butler, Shouse & Joshi, 2008; Park-Saltzman, Wada & Mogami, 2012; Wei, Ku, Russell, Mallinckrodt & Liao, 2008; Yoon & Jepsen, 2008). For example, Asian international students were represented as feeling acculturative stress through their lives in the United States (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Nilsson, Butler, Shouse,

& Joshi, 2008; Rahman & Rollock, 2004; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Yang & Clum, 1994; Ye, 2005; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhang & Dixon, 2003). In research identifying the relationship between acculturative stress of East Asian international students and their use of Internet, Ye (2005) used 26-item scale based on five factors of stress, such as fear, perceived discrimination, perceived hatred, homesickness, and cultural shock to measure students' acculturative stress. Moreover, in a study finding the relationship between acculturation of Asian international students and their degree of stress, Nilsson, Butler, Shouse, and Joshi (2008) indicated stress as academic, social, and financial stresses. While Ye (2005) focused on types of emotion, including fear, perceived discrimination, perceived hatred, homesickness, and cultural shock, Nilsson, Butler, Shouse, and Joshi (2008) followed the way of categorizing stress depending on types of life difficulties. These studies about acculturative stress of Asian international students show that they suffer from acculturative stress in diverse ways and in broad areas of their lives.

Difference

Another focus of the identities represented in the studies about Asian international college students in the United States was “difference” (Choi, 2006; Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gaino, & Baden, 2005; DiAngelo, 2006; Le & Gardner, 2010; Lin & Yi, 1997; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Yang & Clum, 1994). Culture and language were emphasized in the studies even though there can be other ways of seeing Asian international students, such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and history. Furthermore, cultural essentialism which assumes stereotypes of Asian culture as their cultural essences different from American culture is the base of many studies about Asian

international students (Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gaino, & Baden, 2005; Le & Gardner, 2010; Lin & Yi, 1997; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Yang & Clum, 1994), rather than cultural constructivism disrupting cultural dichotomy and simplicity found in few studies about those students (Delgado-Romero & Wu, 2010; DiAngelo, 2006). For example of cultural deficit perspective in studies about Asian international students, Lin and Yi (1997) described differences between Asian international and American domestic students, including linguistic and cultural differences. They found a cause of those difficulties in cultural differences of Asian international students. So, to reduce the culture shock of Asian international students, they suggested a program for helping their cultural adjustment to the United States. In this study, Asian culture was represented as separate and different from American culture and its difference was illustrated as closely connected to difficulties they experience in their lives in the United States.

It is necessary to focus on the combination of identities of Asian international college students constructing the structure of discourses about them, rather than separate elements of their identities. Those studies about Asian international students described that they suffered from many and diverse difficulties and their cultural differences from American culture was blamed for those difficulties (Choi, 2006; Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gaino, & Baden, 2005; DiAngelo, 2006; Le & Gardner, 2010; Lin & Yi, 1997; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Yang & Clum, 1994). Moreover, the studies tried to connect cultural differences of Asian international students to Asian traditions of Confucianism and Buddhism even though there might be a huge gap between those present individuals and the past abstract traditions. Through the combination of difficulty and difference, Asian international students were represented as individuals having

troubles which are difficult to be overcome and belong to only their own culture in some academic discourses while other studies pointing out social and institutional reproduction of unequal power relations between Asian international students and other students in their schools.

Identities of Korean International Students

Identities of Korean students shared the same representations of difficulty based on difference with identities of Asian students (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). A few studies focused on various aspects of their identities, rather than attaching to their Asian cultural tradition (Choi, 2012; Lee, 2015; Park, 2014; Rhee, 2006).

Shared Identities Between Korean and Asian International Students

Most studies about KIS addressed what difficulties they had as well as how they struggled with those difficulties. For example, Chun and Poole (2009) dealt with major stressors, including academic, financial, cultural, psychological, and familial problems and coping strategies for addressing those difficulties of Korean students in graduate social work education. They focused on cultural differences and characteristics of Korean students, such as “Korean students have a more passive orientation to life than their American counterparts” (p. 3). Other research tried to find ways of coping against the acculturative stress that Korean students reportedly suffered from (Heo & Lee, 2007; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004). Heo and Lee (2007) conducted a study about playing basketball as a serious leisure of Korean students to understand their coping strategies. Lee, Koeske, and Sales (2004) investigated the buffering effect of social support on acculturative stress

of Korean students. Focusing on students' difficulties, such as acculturative stress, cultural difference in those studies is the same focus as found in studies about Asian students.

Different Identities Between Asian and Korean International Students

Studies about Korean international college students also have different foci of representations, including socio-economic background as upper-middle class in Korea and transnationality, rather than fixed identity of Korean students at Korean nationality or culture (Choi, 2012; Lee, 2015; Park, 2014; Rhee, 2006). For instance, Lee (2015) focused on the meaning of KESA (Korean Early Study Abroad) students' socioeconomic background as upper-middle class in Korea to their ethnic identity formation. Their socio-economic background enabled their opportunities living in the United States and forming different ethnic identities from their parents and other Koreans. From this study, it was noticeable that they came to have complicated ethnic identities constructed between their upper-middle class backgrounds and direct experiences of living in the United States. Also, Rhee (2006) highlighted the transnational nature of KIS. In her study, it was very difficult to simply differentiate where their narratives came from between Korea or the United States. To better understand their narratives, it was necessary to listen to their stories in a transnational way between two countries and consider their complicated identities, instead of simply reducing their identities into cultural differences of Asians from Americans.

Teaching Korean International Students

The predominant ways of representing Korean international college students in the United States influenced how they were understood within educational contexts.

Their linguistic and cultural differences were described as the main causes of their difficulties in educational situations. For instance, based on his personal experiences as an instructor teaching Korean students, Tucker (2003) described differences in learning styles and study strategies between KIS and American domestic students. Those differences, including writing style, classroom interaction and behavior, content of tests and papers, and view of scholarship resulted in academic difficulties of Korean students in American classrooms where American styles of learning are predominant. Moreover, Kim (2007) focused on the difficulties of relationships between Korean students and their academic advisors in her study about eight Korean doctoral students. Linguistic and cultural differences between Korean students and their advisors were indicated as main causes preventing them from having good relationships with their advisors.

As in the studies about Asian international college students, educational recommendations for teaching Korean students in the United States were basically focused on reducing linguistic and cultural gaps (Kim, 2007; Park, Lee, Yun, & Kim, 2009; Tucker, 2003). Those recommendations included improving teachers' knowledge and attitude about cultural differences and specific strategies for better communication. For example, Tucker (2003) underscored the importance of acknowledging cultural differences between KIS and faculty members. He suggested specific strategies for understanding different cultures of Korean students, including using personal interviews with Korean informants and doing self-assessment through answering questions in some standardized tests about cultural awareness. In addition, Kim (2007) emphasized advisors' roles for cross-cultural academic advising. She maintained that advisors need to acknowledge differences in culture between their Korean students and advisors by

diverse opportunities, such as seminars and handbooks, share useful strategies through networking among faculty members, and improve their intercultural awareness for better relationships. Those attitudes and strategies required to teach Korean students are tied to their identities of linguistic and cultural differences represented in previous studies and not much different from suggestions in studies about Asian students.

Historical Context of KIS' Studying in the U.S.

Korea has been in a geopolitically important location surrounded by multiple Power countries, such as China, Russia (former Soviet Union), and Japan (Yeo & Lee, 2017). The influence of China was very powerful to Korea like other Asian nations until the 19th century. Japan kept their colonial domination of Korea from the beginning of the 20th century until 1945. Although Korea gained independence from Japan, Korea struggled with its role among the world's hegemonic powers including the U.S., China, and Japan. When the Soviet Union and the U.S. were confronting each other in Korean peninsula, this confrontation led to the division of Korea into two parts, North Korea and South Korea. Since the Korean War, Korea has been under strong influence from the U.S. in terms of economy, politics, and culture (Choi & Park, 1996; Kim, 2005; Kim, 2005).

Following the Korean War that resulted in Korea's division, South Korea has made economic progress under the influence of the U.S. since the 1960s (Rhyu, 2002; Yoon, 2006). While there were various discussions surrounding what led to the economic developments of Korea, it is widely understood that the United States played an instrumental part in Korea's economic recovery and development (Rhyu, 2002). In particular, the U.S. provided economic aid to Korea and exerted a very strong influence on the Korean government's policy-making. The U.S. wanted Korea to map out its

economic development strategy as a nation-led and export-based, which eventually became the main direction of Korea's economic development. Korea ranked 10th in the world in terms of nominal gross domestic product (GDP) and in 2020 (Yang, 2021).

In addition, Korea followed the trend of globalization (Chang, 2010; Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, 2010). In 1988, Korea hosted the Summer Olympic Games to show off its economic rise and increased stature globally, and expand international relationships with diverse participating nations. Moreover, from 1997 through 2008, Korean government changed their law to allow their people to go overseas travel without restrictions. Koreans ranked sixth in the world in terms of international tourism (Kim, 2019). Furthermore, Korean government opened their market to the world by the Uruguay round negotiation. In 1997, English was introduced into public education despite Korea's traditional cling to its own language (Lee & Lee, 2018).

An important consequence of globalization is that English has become a very powerful and popular language in Korea (Lee & Lee, 2018). After the independence from Japanese colonization, U.S. cultures, especially American English became more popular in the Korean society. The elites or upper class in Korea began to show off their western tastes, English language and other aspects of U.S. culture. Then the desire for the globalization of the Korean government in the late 20th century contributed to the acceleration of intense demand for English in Korea. Korean people believed that English was one of the most significant criteria judging individuals' competitiveness not only in the world job market but also the domestic job market. Therefore, they started focusing on the education of English by early child English immersion kindergarten, private academy for youth's and adult's English skills, and education program for learning

English in foreign countries. Choi and Choi (2011) maintained that the meaning of English was equal to the individuals' excellence, luxuries, and success in Korea. Koreans had the myth of English that English could be a useful mean to achieve their personal career goals differentiating themselves from others.

Despite the social and economic development in Korea, the majority of their people felt unsatisfactory about their own lives (Kang, 2020). Korea was one of the countries in the world with significantly high rate of suicide (Park, 2019; Seo, 2020). The cause of highest death rate among teenagers was suicide in Korea (Kim & Gu, 2019). According to the 2021 World Happiness Report, Korea ranked 50th out of 95 countries in terms of happiness (Lee, 2021). It seemed that individual people in Korea did not perceive the improvement of their lives while there was the objective advance of the whole Korean society.

In particular, Korean students had been concerned about their academic achievement. This pressure about their academic achievement comes from 학벌주의 [hakbeoljui meaning critical emphasis on the university hierarchy]. In Korea, the higher the rank of university a person enters, the more likely the person can occupy extremely valuable opportunities than others (Kim, 2004). Therefore, students in Korea had lots of loads to study in and out of their schools. In addition, they spent a huge amount of money to improve their academic achievement, especially to earn high scores on their college entrance exams. The majority of students entered universities in Korea even though there are inequalities of the actual social values for their universities. This pressure about their academic performance made Korean students suffer from mental health problems. Some

students commit suicide after finding their test scores of college entrance exam lower than their expectation.

Many Korean students attempted to avoid these harsh and pressured conditions. Those students who were not recognized as successful students in their schools looked for other environments to improve their social value, such as academic achievement. Because of the competitive school climate in Korea, most students thought that schools in other countries would be better and easier for them to get the higher status in terms of their academic performance. The pace of teaching school curriculum was faster in Korean schools than U.S. schools. In their Korean middle schools, KIS already learned what U.S. students learned in their high school. This could be beneficial for KIS to be more competitive in U.S. schools than U.S. students.

Moreover, the recognition of the superiority of U.S. universities can motivate Korean students to move to the United States. U.S. universities are more highly valued than Korean universities by many Koreans. There is a global hierarchy between Korean universities and U.S. universities. Although a student fails to enter a prestigious university in Korea, they might be able to make up for their failure in Korea when they succeed in the enrollment in a U.S. university, even if the institution is not considered a prestigious school. The person might be recognized as academically excellent as the student in a prestigious university in Korea. Moreover, it might be likely for KIS to be recognized as having excellent English skills in Korea. If they succeed in their living in the U.S., they might be able to get double capitals, U.S. university degrees and English in the U.S. which were highly valued in Korea.

Korean students' studying in the U.S. had its own history with some changes in trend. There were four stages in the history of Korean students' studying in the U.S (Yoon, 2012). First, in the 1910s, there were some international students coming from Korea to keep their social movement for the independence of Korea from Japanese colonization. The reason for their studying abroad was actually not their individual studying but the social movement avoiding the oppression from the Japanese colonial government. Second, after the independence from Japanese colonization in 1945, Korean students also visited the U.S. for their own academic purposes. The educational aid in the 1950s and 1960s from the U.S. government, called Minnesota Project and Fulbright program, contributed to the increase of Korean students' studying in the U.S (Kim, 2019). Third, the policy changed by the Korean government 1997 through 2008 allowed Koreans to have overseas travel with less restrictions than before and then there was an explosive increase of studying abroad in the U.S., such as youth's early study abroad at the level of middle or high school and participating in a language (English) training program in the U.S. Fourth, since 2008, there has been a continuous decrease while Korea is still fighting for the third or fourth place in the U.S. in terms of the number of students studying in the U.S. In sum, there has been a growth of the number of Korean students studying in the U.S. since the 1910s, except for the recent decrease. The purpose of their studying in the U.S. had changed from a public motivation, such as a social movement for the independence of Korea or the development of Korean society to a personal motivation, such as the personal accumulation of academic and cultural capital (U.S. degree or English).

Along with the change in the Korean students' trend of studying in the U.S., there was a specific perspective on 유학생 [Yuhakseng meaning international students] in Korea. 'Yuhakseng' refers to how Korean international students were described in Korea. There were differences of the perspectives on Korean international students between the U.S. and Korea. In the U.S., the meaning of Korean international students is close to the minority in terms of race, culture, and citizenship. While being lumped into 'Asian' in the U.S., they encountered many challenges, such as linguistic, social relationship-related, and academic difficulties during their studying abroad. On the other hand, in Korea, they are viewed as the majority in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic status, and culture. Actually, they already belonged to the middle or upper class in Korea before their studying in the U.S. In addition, their experiences of U.S. education added the privileges of their academic degree and English to their given status as the majority in Korea.

Theoretical Framework

Korean international students in the U.S. are facing many issues related to academic achievement, cultural adaptation, mental health, and social relations (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). This study focused on the fundamental issue of KIS identity formation. Among these issues, this study addressed KIS' identity representations in relation to their transnational experiences between Korea and the U.S. This research views individual identities as flexible and complex, while acknowledging the possibilities that their identities were still connected with their old traditions. This perspective is in contrast to the predominantly essentialized perspectives in most studies on Asian international students in the U.S.

The main concepts of identity addressed in this study is identity as *representation* (Proctor, 2004). Every identity we recognize is a kind of representation of an identity as reality out of our understanding. This characteristic of identity as representation leads to the ‘differences’ of identity representations depending on who represents KIS and what context representation occurs. In fact, the variations as the focus of this study are not only the differences between KIS’ self-representations and the representations in U.S. academic discourses but also the differences within diverse representations constructed by KIS themselves. Hall’s concepts about media representations and interpretations, *encoding/decoding*, are useful to account for the differences of identity representation between internal and external representations surrounding individual KIS (Hall, 2006). In addition, the concepts about the complexity of identity representations, *layering* and *suturing*, can contribute to the explanation of various identity representations among individual KIS (Hall, 2003).

Considering the contexts of representations is important because individuals’ representations are created within specific environments. In this study, transnationalism and postcolonialism are critical contexts on which the representations of their self-identities and two countries they were living, including Korea and the United States, were based. These contexts help us view their representations not only as personal understandings of themselves freely floating but also as structural understanding loosely anchored at social and historical dynamics surrounding their self-identities. First, it means that the inequalities in the historical relationship between Korea and the United States have the potential to act on the representations of their self-identities. In addition,

KIS' transnational experiences moving from their home country to another society could have impacts on how they understood themselves.

Therefore, in this chapter, the main concepts of identity (traditional and alternative concepts), the characteristic of identity (representation), representation process (encoding/decoding), the complexity of identity representation (layering and suturing), and the contexts of KIS' identity representations (transnationalism and postcolonialism) will be examined to clarify what this study assumes about identity construction.

Concepts of Identity

The concept of identity discussed in this study includes both individual diversity and collective unity. This is related to the history of the development of identity theories, which can be said to be two aspects: traditional identity politics and new politics of identity (Procter, 2004). Consistent with Hall's position, this study assumes that the identity representation of KIS theoretically includes both of these attributes.

Traditional Concept of Identity

In studies about identity, traditional concept of identity as *collective unity* has been more predominant than alternative concept of identity as individual diversity (Procter, 2004). That concept of identity focuses on homogeneity, rather than heterogeneity within a group.

A traditional identity politics defines itself in terms of an absolute, undivided commitment to, and identification with, a particular community; a group which presents a united front through the exclusion of all others. Phrases such as 'it's a black thing', 'it's a gay thing', 'it's a women's thing', carry the traces of a

traditional identity politics in that they imply a group identity that is unified through exclusion. (Proctor, 2004: p. 118)

Traditional conceptions of identity have been described as if it did not change over time. These notions often do not include internal contradictions. This unity of identity was maximized by excluding others which were considered as belonging to an external group. In these representations of inclusion and exclusion, the source of this unity was mostly the old tradition of each group. In the case of studies on Korean international students in the U.S., they reproduced the unified identity of KIS based on traditional Asian culture, such as Confucianism. At the same time, KIS' identity was often represented as completely opposite to the Americans' identity.

Alternative Concept of Identity

The second phase of the development of identity theories emerged from resistance to traditional identity politics. This new phase can be called the identity of difference. While a traditional concept of identity emphasized the unity and absoluteness of identity, in the new concept of identity, difference and relativity were focused on.

... Hall's work has always displayed a certain skepticism about politics committed to singular, homogeneous, unified identities such as 'the' working class, or 'the' black community. However, it is only in the late 1980s – and in line with the theoretical developments on subjectivity outlined in the previous chapter, that he seeks explicitly to define a new politics of identity: new conceptions of identity requires us also to look at redefinitions of the forms of politics which follow that: the politics of difference, the politics of self-reflexivity, a politics that is open to contingency but still able to act. (Proctor, 2004: p. 118)

The traditional concept of identity can be maintained by ignoring and suppressing differences within a group. However, as the suppression of diversity within a group becomes no longer available, the identity of difference gradually became important. Hall (1987) pointed out some characteristics which were significant to the new concept of identity, including difference, self-reflexivity, and contingency. Here, the difference within a group was made possible because of the 'self-reflexivity' that reflects on the diversity within a group. In addition, the importance of contingency grew in identity representations which helped us recognize that a particular identity representation is not accepted equally by everyone and can be perceived differently depending on the individual or group who encounters it.

Identity as Representation

While recognizing identity as a process, this study focused on the specific nature of identity as representation. Therefore, as Hall (2005) argues, this study assumed that the real world lies outside that we cannot fully recognize or represent.

It can be used, on the one hand, simply as another way of talking about how one images a reality that exists 'outside' the means by which things are represented: a conception grounded in a mimetic theory of representation. ... My own view is that events, relations, structures do have conditions of existence and real effects, outside the sphere of the discursive; but that it is only within the discursive, and subject to its specific conditions, limits and modalities, do they have or can they be constructed within meaning. (p. 444)

If reality is replaced with identity in the above quotation, it can be assumed that there is a space that cannot be completely connected between reality and identity.

Therefore, in order to understand the identity of KIS, it is inevitably necessary to use the identity representation as a recognition tool. In addition, identity representation not only reflects identity but also exerts a substantial influence on constructing our meaning about identity in human semantic systems. Therefore, understanding the identity representation of KIS and responding appropriately to it can be said to be a very important factor in forming and understanding the identity of KIS. In short, identity representation goes beyond simply reflecting the nature of identity, and has a substantial impact on our understanding of the identity of a particular object, and thereby affects our thinking and behavior toward the individual, which is the basic source of that identity. It has a practical and political aspect.

Representation Process and Characteristics

An identity about a person could be understood as a code about that person. A code is a specific relationship between an object, sign, and concept. The relationship of a code is arbitrary. An object is able to be related to diverse signs and concepts through the process of code making. Likewise, a person's identity is able to be constructed in various ways. A person can be connected with various signs and concepts by different people within different contexts. Therefore, the relationships among a person, sign, and concept are unstable. This instability makes the flexibility of an identity as representation.

Representation is the process of making a code as a relationship between an object, sign, and concept. Although we mostly can see only the product of code-making, representation includes the process as well as the product of code-making. Hall (2006) broadly divided the process of representation into two aspects, including encoding and decoding. Encoding is the process of making initial code of a specific object, and

decoding is the process of interpreting a given code of an object. While acknowledging both aspects can happen to any individual, he focused on mass media' encoding and the individual's decoding process.

Encoding takes place within specific culture and history, not in a vacuum, which produce a specific way of coding (Hall, 2006). Therefore, the representation process and encoding as the product of the process is not neutral. As Foucault claimed, the meaning of an object is not produced in a vacuum (Hall, 2003). In a specific historical period, there is a specific discourse which makes something meaningful while leading others less meaningful. Hall created the term "preferred meaning" to indicate that there is a meaning which is preferred to other meanings in terms of the process of representation. Without any discourse emerging from specific historical conditions, a representation cannot have any meaning to people. For instance, KIS' race as an Asian cannot have its own meaning beyond the current context of racial discourses. Many statements about race repeat a specific meaning of KIS' race as 'Asian' contributing to the preference of the meaning within specific culture and history. Later, the sign of 'Asian' is dominantly connected to the specific meaning so that it contributes to the representation of KIS' identity within this specific cultural and historical context.

Here, a meaning connected with a sign of an object actually means 'connotation,' rather than 'denotation' (Hall, 1997). Denotation is a literal definition of an object while connotation is a contextual definition. For example, the denotation of 'Asian' is "a native or inhabitant of Asia" or "a person of Asian descent" which is found in dictionaries (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The connotation of 'Asian' could be different from the denotation and is continuously modified and expanded into various meanings depending

on specific contexts, such as ‘model minority’ and ‘foreigner’ (Lee, 1996) Those connotations seem to be natural to people. However, the code of an object is the product of the process of coding. The connection between ‘Asian’ and its connotational meanings is unstable and arbitrary. There is a gap between the code elements which cannot be justified logically. The connotation is the product of artificial naturalization. Literally, it is ‘en-coding’ to make some new meanings of an object depending on the cultural and historical contexts of the representation.

While a discourse can be pointed out as one of the important elements contributing to this naturalization of encoding and encoded meanings, Hall understood that there were multiple forces involved in the process of representation. It means that representation is surrounded with hegemony which is “relations of social forces” (Hall, 1986). Every social force tries to recreate the meaning of significant concepts to contribute to perpetuating their own influences. The process or gap between denotation and connotation of a sign is the critical point where those social forces can implant the ideologies reflecting their perspectives into the connotational meaning. These powers continuously negotiate to get the best meaning for their own interests.

Individuals, not only social structure, also have their own process of code-making while accepting the dominant representations given by external forces. Hall (2006) believed that the meaning interpreted by individuals should be systematically different from the meaning preferred within a society. It means that individuals have a separate ‘representation system’ of code-making (“decoding”) for creating their own representations which is different from the external encoding system. When individuals try to understand the meaning of a specific representation, they are situated within a

unique environment and context different from the encoding system. In addition, for individuals, the preferred meanings are “symbolic violence” unilaterally defining the meaning of a sign which individuals encounter. When individuals are aware of the gap between their own understanding and externally imposed meanings, they might want to resist the preferred meanings as symbolic violence. To make their own representations of something, they need to deconstruct (“decode”) the given, preferred meanings. Although the preferred meanings are powerful with dominant discourses within a specific historical context, a separate representation system contributes to the “asymmetry of representation between encoder and decoder” (Hall, 2006). The possibility of asymmetrical representations is the reason why Hall mentioned that “preferred meanings are dominant, but not definitely determining” what individuals produce for the same sign (Hall, 2006).

Individual’s decoding can be various. For instance, three types of decoding were shown in Hall’s hypothetical explanation about how people decode dominant discourses from mass media, especially television (Hall, 2006). In particular, he suggested three types of positions in individuals’ decodings which are critical in their representations of dominant discourses in mass media, including “dominant-hegemonic position,” “negotiated position,” and “oppositional position.” First, individuals with “dominant-hegemonic position” accept and reproduce dominant discourses about phenomena represented in mass media. This position is to follow the encoding of those media which consists of the “professional codes” media professionals create. Therefore, those individuals come to acknowledge the connotational meanings and dominant ideologies encoded in external representations. Second, “negotiated position” lets individuals have contradictory perspectives on the same phenomenon, but on different levels. Those

individuals use dominant discourses to interpret the phenomenon on a macro level. However, they adopt different viewpoints on the same phenomenon when they understand the phenomenon on a micro level. Therefore, it is available for them to have “a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements” in their perspectives on the same phenomenon. Third, individuals with “oppositional position” decode a dominant discourse in a different way from mass media. This position makes individuals consistently have different, alternative viewpoints, rather than accepting given ideologies or negotiating their perspectives on a phenomenon depending on specific level of interpretation.

In the examples of KIS’ decoding representations about Asian international students, we can similarly expect the variations of their positions. Not only mass media but also other means, such as academic studies and personal conversation in everyday life are producing enormous representations about Asian international students living in the United States. Some KIS or KIS sometimes will follow and internalize the same representations about themselves as passive, calm, high-achieving students constructed within a specific, US, context. However, they might face the conflict between their own understanding about themselves and others’ perspectives on KIS. KIS’ comparison between how they were perceived in Korea and how they are being seen in the U.S. might be able to make their positions in decoding representations about themselves shift faster than others. Finally, KIS’ self-representations can move on from “dominant-hegemonic” to “negotiated” through “oppositional” compared to dominant discourses about KIS.

The Complexity of KIS’ Identity Constructions

While Hall's concepts of encoding/decoding could be used to show differences between identity representations forced by dominant discourses and identity representations which KIS experienced, it was necessary to supplement the complexity considering transnational and postcolonial contexts in which KIS were located. Especially, the notions of identity representation as 'layering' and 'suturing' were significant to visually complicated and diverse understanding of identity representations depending on individual KIS' contexts. Interestingly, these concepts, including encoding/decoding, layering, and suturing, commonly assumed the basic nature of identity as text. Therefore, all of these concepts had significant implications demonstrating how KIS' identities as texts or textiles were written or weaved by KIS themselves or the relation of other external forces.

Layering. The concept of 'layering' in this study was to help to frame KIS' identities based on temporal complexity. Most of previous studies represented KIS' identities in a simple way focusing on the relationship between their collective tradition, especially Confucianism, and their individual identities (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). This inference was useful to simply understand the reason why KIS experienced cultural shock in the U.S. focusing on cultural differences between Korea and the U.S. However, there was an enormous gap between traditional Asian culture and their current identities. Those studies excluded KIS' previous experiences in Korea and the historical relationship between Korea and the U.S. This specific omission of KIS' personal and critical histories could distort our understanding of their identities.

Instead of simply identifying KIS' identities with their old tradition, this study attempted to embrace more histories of KIS to deepen our understanding of their identities. There was not only a layer of Confucianism but also other multiple layers being accumulated over and over. This study tried to find as many layers as possible to find historically complex identities of KIS. In addition, this study focused on the relationships or interactions among multiple layers of identities. It meant that an identity layer currently at the top of KIS' identities could not totally cover other identity layers below. Actually, understanding an identity layer would be helpful to find how or why KIS constructed the other layers. In addition, what KIS looked like in a specific time was the combination of multiple identity layers, not only the top layer itself.

Suturing. This study assumed that the process of identity construction was similar to 'suturing' multiple textiles. An individual was located in the social environment, including many social forces (Hall, 1986). Those social forces produced various discourses to lead to what was beneficial to achieve their own purposes. At the same time, an individual also had their own psychological process inside of themselves. Although external forces with dominant discourses in a society were powerful to form who an individual was, those forces should go through an individual's own process and then should be 'sutured' by the individual to make an identity within a specific context. Hall (2003) suggested the concept of identity as 'point' of suturing identity texts. An individual was located between multiple forces to produce identity representations. Those social forces and discourses met within an individual as an important point, where they were sutured. Therefore, this concept did not solely believe in the individual's subjectivity or determinism of social structure. In addition, the concept of suturing in this

study meant not only weaving multiple social forces from different areas within a society but also fabricating various layers of identity representations which were constructed at historically different times.

The Special Contexts of KIS' Identity Constructions

The identity representation of KIS covered in this study needs to be related not only to the racial and cultural conditions of Asian but also to the special context of transnationalism and postcolonialism. First, spatially, KIS live a transnational life that crosses the borders between Korea and the United States for their studying abroad. Further, historically considering the unequal power relationship between Korea and the U.S., it is necessary to understand the identity representation of KIS from the perspective of postcolonialism.

Identity Representation in a Transnational Context

Not only the past and collective history of nations but also the individual's direct experiences have an important influence on the identity of an individual. In this respect, the mixed nature in KIS' identity can be better understood when we examine not only the context of postcolonialism but also the context of transnationalism.

A dictionary meaning of "transnational" is literally "extending or going beyond national boundaries" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). As globalization progresses with the development of transportation and communication technologies, the transnational phenomena have become more active than in the past, in which goods, technologies, knowledge, people, and many other things move around the world across national boundaries. Transnationalism believes that these increased transnational mobilities have an important influence on human life. In other words, according to transnationalism,

people live by constructing their own social worlds, crossing two or more boundaries, not staying within one national boundary through transnational experiences (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Vertovec, 2001).

In particular, this study is interested in how Korean international students' experiences of studying in the United States have an impact and meaning on their identity formation. In most studies related to existing international students, Korean students are depicted as typical Asians, very different from Americans, even when they have been in the United States for extended periods (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). Of course, the culture and history experienced by international students in their home country will have a significant influence over student's attitudes, experiences, and perspectives during their time in the United States. However, it tends to be overlooked that international students voluntarily move to the U.S. in favor of the U.S. education and social system, and that the experiences of studying abroad in the U.S. have the potential to influence their identity formation as much as their experiences in their home country.

In this respect, the hybridity attribute of KIS' identities needs to be considered in connection with transnationalism. According to Appadurai (2005), personal styles and cultures tend to be deterritorialized in the globalized era. It can be said that the existing culture has a strong tendency to be formed mainly by geographical boundaries.

Therefore, there were many cases in which national cultures such as Korean culture and American culture, or cultures of smaller units, coincided with regional divisions.

However, with the development of transportation, communication, and media, the

possibility of the culture of one region spreading to another has increased. Therefore, people can live by forming a variety of cultures and styles without being greatly restricted by their respective regions by combining not only the culture of the region in which they live but also the cultures they encountered through direct and indirect experiences.

There are few studies related to the hybridity in international student identity, but some studies have focused on the existence of international students between the country of study and their home country, that is, the in-betweenness of international students' identities. They have racial and ethnic backgrounds, such as Asians and Koreans, but it does not mean that their identities are all formed in the same way. The possibility exists for KIS to construct a deterritorialized identity that is not confined to any one regional boundary through indirect experiences through media, etc. and through direct experiences of studying abroad in the United States. As a result, the position of their identities can be viewed as belonging to both their host country (the U.S.) and their home country (Korea), or as a third space, in-between that does not belong to either.

In this vein, Rhee (2006) expressed this characteristic of transnational identity as the state of "traveling" as follows:

Our transnational (educational) traveling was supposed to be a one-time excursion filled with excitement, fantasy and a little bit of anxiety. Yet, as Smith notes, this journey has disoriented many. ... Within our imaginations, at the time of departure, we were not prepared at all for the consequences of transnational displacement and diasporic experiences as Third World im/migrant women of color in the US." (p. 603)

The hybridity in the identity of Korean international students formed in this way can be more influential than we think in common sense. For international students, the experience of studying in the United States does not simply exist for a while and then disappear back to their original identity and origin, but it can be an important trace that remains and rewritten forever in the lives of international students.

Identity Representation in a Postcolonial Context

The most basic logic of colonial rule begins with separating the colonizer from the colonized and defining the colonizers as superior and the colonized as inferior. Orientalism, as pointed out by Said (2003), is at the core of this dichotomy. In other words, Orientalism begins by dividing the world and civilization into a dichotomy of Western and Eastern or Occident and Orient. Here, Western and Occident are at the center of defining and representing the world, and Eastern and Orient are the objects of such regulation and representation. These regulations and representations are usually made in a way that expresses Occident as superior or normal, and Orient as inferior or abnormal, and has been progressing for a long time in many areas such as media, academics, and art.

However, Bhabha (1994) argued that such a distinction is not really possible, and that everything is intermingled with one another rather than distinct. In the context of colonial or post-colonialism, the concept of hybridity means that neither the colonizer nor the colonized exist in a purely distinct state. Through the experiences of colonial rule and domination for a certain period of time, both the colonizer and the colonized consciously or unconsciously accepted the characteristics of the other, and were constantly influenced by them. Therefore, individuals or groups that seem to have only the attributes of the

colonizer also contain the attributes of the dominated, and individuals or groups that seem to have only the attributes of the colonized also contain the attributes of the ruler.

This state of hybridity makes it difficult to distinguish between the colonizer and the colonized based on their pure character. The pure image of the ruler and the dominant that people are drawing in their heads is not real, but it exists in people's perception. Therefore, it becomes difficult, at least logically, to split the two with the composition of the dominator and the dominated, and justify the domination of the superior group over the inferior group. As such, Bhabha's concept of hybridity can be said to be very subversive politically in the sense of destroying the dichotomy of colonial rule itself.

This study implicitly uses this concept of hybridity to understand the identity of Korean international students. Unfortunately, existing studies involving Korean students have focused on describing Korean students as typical Asians or Koreans, explaining how different attributes they have from Americans and how much of a challenge they face in the new American society. However, looking at the history of the relationship between Korea and the United States, it is difficult to express Korea and the United States in a different society. In particular, the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan during World War II contributed decisively to the indirect termination of Japanese domination on the Korean Peninsula, and during the Cold War era, Korea was the last of the free camps due to its geopolitical position. It has been regarded as a bastion, and in the Korean War, military intervention has been actively conducted to ensure that Korea (South Korea) is not occupied by communist forces.

Since then, the military government of the United States ruled South Korea for many years in the name of helping South Korean society find stability, exerting a

fundamental influence on many aspects of South Korea's economy, education, politics, and culture. Even today, the influence of the U.S. over Korea as a world superpower is significant, and the U.S. troops are still stationed in Korea, and in the event of a war on the Korean Peninsula, the control of military operations remains with the U.S. Of course, there are changes in Koreans' perception of the United States and individual differences exist, but the fact that the United States is very important and influential to Koreans remains. Because of this influence, Koreans, consciously and unconsciously, have lived by sometimes partially accepting and sometimes partially resisting what they regard as American elements. Therefore, it is possible to maintain that Korean international students already had a hybrid nature between Korea and the United States even before they started studying in the U.S.

Research Questions

This study seeks to understand the identity constructions of KIS based on their transnational experiences between Korea and the United States. The major guiding question and sub-questions were formulated as follows:

How did KIS construct their own identities based on their transnational experiences between Korea and the U.S.?

- How were KIS 'encoded' by representations in discourses about them between Korea and the United States?
- How did KIS 'decode' various representations in discourses to construct their identities across two countries?

In this study, KIS had chances to talk about their identities constructed within the specific context. First, they could narrate their individual experiences and interpretations

(decoding) during their living in the U.S. Through focusing on this psychological aspect, we could see what they went through internally. Second, KIS could talk about what others thought of (encoding) KIS through this study. KIS acknowledged how others interpreted KIS influenced KIS' representations about themselves. In addition, the 'context' of KIS' identity representations was unique in terms of two aspects. First, there were the differences of life conditions between Korea and the United States. Second, there were special relationships based on post-colonial or imperial power relations between Korea and the United States. It meant that Korea was not only different from the U.S. but also closely connected with the U.S. Likewise, self-representations of KIS between Korea and the U.S. also were likely to seem to be separate and, at the same time, connected with each other. These complicated conditions required me to explore not only the isolated representations of their self-identities but also its connections with dominant discourses and international relationships between Korea and the United States.

Moreover, through these research questions, this study attempted to find various differences and relationships surrounding the representation of KIS' identities. First, this study addressed the differences and relationships between KIS' own decoding and others' encoding of KIS' identities. Second, this study focused on the differences and relationships between their previous identities in Korea and their current identities in the U.S. Third, there were variations among six KIS in this study. Finally, this study attempted to reveal the differences and relationships between this study and Confucianism-centered essentialism in previous studies about Asian and Korean international students in the U.S. Through understanding differences and relationships

among diverse representations about KIS' identities, it could become clear that the notion of unified identity was unavailable to explain KIS' identity constructions.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand KIS' identity constructions and narrative inquiry was a helpful approach. Despite the possibilities of other representations about KIS, specific representations, 'encoding,' about KIS have been dominant in previous studies (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). In studies about Asian international students, orientalism-like viewpoints were predominant even in the studies conducted by Asian or Korean researchers (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Nilsson, Butler, Shouse, & Joshi, 2008; Rahman & Rollock, 2004; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Yang & Clum, 1994; Ye, 2005; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhang & Dixon, 2003). It meant that perspectives about KIS' identities other than essentializing views were intentionally or unintentionally ignored in academic discourses.

Narrative inquiry is a type of study focusing on research participants' own storytelling to reveal voices which have been marginalized (Byrne, 2017). In particular, this study focused on KIS' narratives about external encoding and internal decoding about their identities. Through listening to these narratives, we can understand their identities in a different way than preexisting perspectives.

Narrative Inquiry: Three dimensional narrative inquiry space

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) put forth the 'three dimensional narrative inquiry space' framework of narrative inquiry. The three dimensions of the metaphoric narrative inquiry space are: temporality (past, present, and future), spatiality (place), and sociality

(the personal and social relation). For Clandinin and Connelly (2000), exploring one's narrative means understanding one's experiences constructed within specific time, place, and relationships. These dimensions of narrative inquiry space guided data collection, especially my interview questions, and data analysis. Moreover, these dimensions were 'sutured' and 'layered' in participants' narratives, rather than being departmentalized.

Temporality

The first dimension of narrative inquiry space is temporality. All narratives include particular time periods as basic background. The time of a narrative is "in the midst of living their stories. Their lives do not begin the day we arrive nor do they end as we leave. Their lives continue" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 63-64). The temporality of KIS' identity constructions in this study meant not only their current experiences but also their past and future experiences. This notion of temporality is distinct from the trend in previous studies about Asian or Korean international students in the U.S (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). Those studies mostly focused on KIS' current experiences, such as their difficulties and coping strategies in the U.S. Alternatively, other studies drew on a specific temporal characteristic, such as KIS' Asian tradition, to essentialize their identities as exotic. Previous studies missed other periods of their past, such as the history of an international relationship between Korea and the U.S. as well as KIS' personal histories in their home country. This study attempted to comprehensively address the temporality of KIS' narratives, rather than either focusing on their current experiences or old Asian tradition, such as Confucianism.

Spatiality

Connelly and Clandinin explained that spatiality “refers to ‘the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place’” (2006, pp. 408-481). Furthermore, Clandinin (2013) pointed out that “people, place, and stories are inextricably linked” (p. 41). The unique characteristic of spatiality in this study is transnationality. KIS constructed their narratives across two countries, Korea and the U.S. Their stories in Korea were different from their stories in the U.S. It was impossible to understand the meaning of their experiences in the U.S. without listening to their stories in Korea. In fact, the differences in places were not only geographical but also the differences of identities involved in the differences of places for KIS. In addition, KIS’ narratives were the stories of finding appropriate places to improve their identities. The reasons why they left Korea was that they thought their home country was inappropriate for them to make their identities better. KIS believed that the U.S. was the place where they would be able to supplement or replace their previous identities in Korea.

Sociality

The sociality in narrative inquiry space includes both personal and social conditions of individuals’ experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Personal conditions are “feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006: p.480). Social conditions refer to the “milieu, the conditions under which people’s experiences and events are unfolding” (Clandinin, 2013: p. 40). KIS had their own personal characteristics, especially as psychological processes, to interpret their experiences. Additionally, KIS were situated within specific environments, such as their families, schools, local communities, and larger societies, which interacted with their

own personal conditions. These social conditions also contribute to the various meanings of narratives, such as cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic.

Setting

This study recruited research participants studying at the same university which is located in the Midwest of the U.S. The “Midwest University” (all names of persons and institutions used in this study are pseudonym) has a special office serving the international students, including providing them with practical services, counseling about general issues, and hosting cultural events. According to International Student and Scholar Office (2019), the university includes 5,973 international students who made up 11.72% of total enrollment in the 2018-2019 academic year. The percentage of international students in the university was bigger than the average portion of international students in the United States, 5.5% (IIE, 2020). In particular, Korean international students are ranked as the third biggest international student population in the university, following Chinese and Indian international students. Korean international students have some student associations, such as the Korean International Student Group (KISG) and the Midwest University Korean Graduate Students Association (MUKGSA).

Research Participants

To study the complexity of Asian international students in the U.S., this study narrowed its population of interest down to Korean international students studying in the same U.S. university. While there is a diversity in Asian international student populations in the U.S., it would be difficult for an individual researcher to understand the complicated process and characteristics of identities for all Asian international student populations. I simply had better access to Korean international students than other Asian

international students (Given, 2012) and believed that their stories, experiences, and identities were compelling for this research.

In addition, this study had additional criteria in recruiting research participants other than ethnicity (Given, 2012). First, this study focused on Korean international ‘undergraduate’ students to study those who were more unfamiliar with the researcher as a graduate student. This difference in academic level between the researcher and the research participants helped the researcher become more interested in individual interviews with them than interviews with other Korean international graduate students. Second, Korean international students who had studied for at least a year in the university were recruited. The length of studying or living was significant in the constructions of their transnational narratives. Third, this study put emphasis on the research participants’ voluntary participation. I often used public spaces, such as the Facebook page for Midwest University Korean undergraduate students, to recruit research participants, rather than my personal social networks. While this way of recruiting led me to put in more time for establishing rapport with research participants, I could find more voluntary research participants through this method than the method of using my personal social networks. Finally, I recruited the research participants with as varied backgrounds as possible, except for in gender and marital status. In fact, the research participants had diverse backgrounds in terms of their academic majors, educational career, length of living in the U.S., and their home towns in Korea. The research participants of this study were six undergraduate students who studied at Midwest University, 유나 (Yoona), 사라 (Sara), 다나 (Dana), 나은 (Naeun), 유리 (Yuri), and 기호 (Keeho). Most participants were females, except for Keeho (male), and unmarried, except for Naeun (married). In

terms of their educational path, three of them, Yoona, Sara, and Dana, studied at U.S. high schools before studying at Midwest University while Sara also attended a U.S. elementary school before. Two of the research participants, Naeun and Keeho, transferred from other colleges in the U.S. to Midwest University. Finally, Yuri studied at an international high school in Korea before coming to the U.S. In terms of the states of their elementary or high schools which the participants attended, there was some diversity: Kansas (Yoona's high school), Tennessee (Sara's elementary school), Illinois (Sara's high school), New York (Dana's high school), Georgia (Keeho's former college), and Washington (Naeun's former college). Additionally, at the time of initial interviews, three of them— Sara, Dana, and Yuri— were still in their undergraduate programs while other participants, Yoona, Naeun, and Keeho, had recently graduated. In terms of their academic majors, all participants majored in different disciplines: psychology, developmental psychology, chemical engineering, economics, communication, and sports management. Moreover, they lived in mostly different cities in Korea: Seoul (Yoona and Sara), Daejeon, Incheon, Jeju, and Suwon.

Data Collection

This study adopted in-depth interviews as the primary method to learn about KIS' transnational narratives. In particular, semi-structured, individual interviews were conducted with six Korean international undergraduate students. Before each interview, open question surveys were collected to gain basic information about participants' backgrounds through emails. Questions in the survey briefly covered the background information about research participants, such as their motivations to study in the U.S., academic majors, and length of residency in the U.S. This information was used as basis

to do individual interviews with the participants and more specific information was gathered in the interviews.

The information provided in the open question surveys were amplified in individual interviews to understand students' identities in relation to their everyday lives, personal histories, and cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Therefore, the first interview with each participant focused on digging into the basic information they provided through their emails and was very unstructured to explore their life experiences across two countries. Moreover, the beginning of every interview was not highly structured while starting to find participants' own issues in their everyday lives. However, the more I had meetings with participants, the more focused and deeper individual interviews were talking mainly about their identities and understanding about Korea and the United States. Simple memos were written to find important points for follow-up questions during the interviews. When they have difficulties explaining their lives, specific tools, such as their photos and belongings, were used to promote comfortable conversations. Each interview separately took place with each participant in a public space and took around 60-90 minutes with voice-recording for transcription.

Data Analysis

In this study, the repetitive, reflective, and dialogic nature of qualitative data analysis was acknowledged while following general techniques and stages of qualitative research. The dialogue happened interacting with research questions, data, previous literature about Asian and Korean international students, the theoretical framework of this study, and my positionality. As the first stage of data analysis, the interviews were transcribed in Korean. Second, microanalysis was carried out while reading through the

whole transcripts, highlighting, and labelling specific words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This cycle was used to generate as many significant codes as possible. Third, structures of codes were identified through re-reading the transcripts and the results of microanalysis. With this process, significance of a code and the relationships and hierarchies among various codes within the transcripts became clear. Fourth, research questions were revised and connected to the results of coding. Writing statements answering initial research questions was attempted at this stage to find the meanings of collected data. Furthermore, there were member checking processes in which the results of data analysis and interpretation were shared to better reflect their own perspectives about their identity construction through follow-up communication (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, previous studies about Asian and Korean international students and the theoretical framework of this study (encoding/decoding, transnationalism, and postcolonialism) were addressed to interpret how KIS constructed their identities.

My Positionality in This Study

Positionality is the characteristic of one's positions in relation to others (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Lee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, 2001). This concept of position is a social and political one, rather than a physical position. In terms of a specific criteria, one's position can be understood within a society. If two persons participating in the same study can be categorized into the same or different categories, such as heterosexual and homosexual persons in terms of sexuality, these similarities or differences of positions can affect how they view their world.

In qualitative research, especially interview studies, a researcher collects information from their social relationships with other people. A researcher is a key instrument in their research (Creswell, 2007). In particular, a researcher conducting interviews is a key instrument in conducting their research, including research design, data collection, data analysis, and data representation. For instance, a researcher should form social relationships with their research participants within a specific social context to ask them interview questions. In these relationships for research, their social positions are critical to each other in understanding the meanings of questions and answers between an interviewer and an interviewee.

Reflexivity is necessary for a researcher to understand and improve their research process. Reflexivity is a researcher's self-examination of the relative positions between the researcher and the research participants in the same study (Bourke, 2014). The more a researcher is aware of their positionality in their research, the better they can frame their study, collect data, attend to the meanings of their collected data, and write their manuscript. A researcher ought to reflect on their own backgrounds and histories to examine how those characteristics affect every stage and element of their study and how their research participants perceive the researcher's behaviors toward them, such as research topics and interview questions.

For specific reflexivity, acknowledging the multiplicity of my positions and identities was required. Among various positions and identities of mine, special positions and identities were focused on more than other positions and identities at a specific research stage.

First, during research design, my position as an international student shaped the research topic. I have never thought of my position as a foreign student before starting my study abroad in the U.S. Likewise, I have never expected that I would conduct research about international students in the U.S. Broadly, I was interested in studying the knowledge about social foundations or contexts of (U.S. or Korean) ‘domestic’ education when I was looking for an academic department for my PhD degree. However, through my experiences as an international student at a U.S. university, I became increasingly aware of different treatment between international and U.S. domestic students. I thought that these differences of treatment came from others’ own understanding international students in the U.S. I could confirm this difference of treatment and perception between international and domestic students when I conducted the literature review of Asian and Korean international students in the U.S. Asian and Korean international students were simply described as a totally different group from domestic students in the U.S. The description in previous studies mismatched with my own experiences and changes of identities as a Korean international student in the U.S.

In terms of the decision about the nationality of research participants, I focused on Korean international students because of the sameness of their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds as mine. My experiences in the U.S. led to the development of my racial identity as an Asian. Therefore, I considered conducting research about ‘Asian’ international students, not Korean students. However, it seemed difficult for me to collect data, especially through individual interviews, using diverse primary languages of Asian international students, such as Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. I expected that it would be

less difficult for me as a Korean student to get ‘social proximity’ from other Korean international students in the U.S (Ganga & Scott, 2006).

Second, at the stage of data collection, I experienced the differences as well as commonalities with my Korean research participants. As I expected at the stage of research design, I could have “an expediency of access” for Korean international students (Chavez, 2008). The commonality of linguistic background made me and my research participants have active conversations in Korea. Moreover, I was able to understand many contexts of their educational experiences not only in Korea but also in the U.S. However, there were also some important differences in upbringing and experiences between myself and the research participants. For instance, all participants were undergraduate students studying in the U.S. university. I never had that experience as an international undergraduate student. I came to the US for graduate school and was older than my participants. It was somewhat difficult to understand the academic system and culture of U.S. undergraduate school, such as the relationship between undergraduate students and their academic advisor and student clubs on campus. As a graduate student, I found it fascinating to learn from my participants about different academic systems and U.S. undergraduate students’ culture. Even some research participants graduated from U.S. high schools which were more different from graduate schools. Originally, I planned to interview them about their experiences in U.S. university and Korean K-12 level schools. However, their experiences in U.S. high school seemed very significant to understand why they originally made their decisions to move to the U.S. Therefore, I had to listen to and learn their experiences in the U.S. before their undergraduate school.

Moreover, in terms of various dimensions of students' identities, I found some limitations of perspectives on identities in the extant literature. I originally intended to focus on the racial or cultural identities of Korean international students in the U.S. These preferences were shaped by the curriculum of my doctoral program. Although my doctoral program did not directly address any topic about international students, its focus on culture and race seemed to be relevant to understanding Korean students' lived experiences in a Western and foreign country. However, my research participants were serious about academic achievement, social relationships, and careers after their graduation, rather than sociologically critical issues, such as racial or cultural aspects of their identities. Of course, racial and cultural lenses were able to be applied to the research participants' interests to differently understand those issues.

Furthermore, there were other differences of individual characteristics between me and my research participants which could be more sensitive to those who shared Korean culture, including age and gender. While there have been some changes of culture in Korea, the relationships between different ages or genders are still not equal or comfortable. Except for one participant, all other participants identified as female. My position as an older, male, graduate student, researcher could be understood as higher or more authoritative to most of the participants as younger, female, undergraduate, and the researched. These differences or hierarchy of positionality might contribute to participants' passive responses within Korean culture while I tried to make my participants feel more comfortable about the conversations.

Finally, at the stage of data interpretation, my position as an academic researcher was felt more salient than any other stage of this study. While data collection was focused

on listening to research participants' perspectives and stories, I was able to reveal my own viewpoint as a researcher at the stage of data interpretation. As earlier mentioned, at the stage of data collection, there were some gaps of interview topics between me and my participants. In data interpretation, I attempted to use my racial and cultural perspectives on my participants' experiences between Korea and the U.S. On the one hand, this difference of dominant positionality between two stages of the research process was based on the habit of academic writing. My dissertation belonged to academic research so that the interpretation based on academic discourses was required to contribute to the advancement of relevant academic disciplines.

In sum, the multiplicity of my positionalities led to diverse effects on this study at various stages of the research process. My positionality as a cultural insider of Korean international students in the U.S. helped me have more access for my research participants. On the other hand, some of my positionality, such as an older, male, graduate, and researcher might be more emphasized to the research participants, especially in individual interviews. It is not possible for a researcher to have absolute insider or outsider positionality in their study. Moreover, that positionality of an insider or outsider does not have only strength or weakness for their study (Chavez, 2008). My intentions are to continue engaging in honest reflection and reflexivity to refine my research with other Korean international students.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The research participants in this study had significant transnational experiences between Korea and the United States. These experiences contributed to their identity construction. These experiences also combined with their agency to create the variations of identity formation among the six participants supporting that identity is not just a “stable core” (Hall, 2003). It has the characteristic of the process, not only the outcome. Therefore, it can be called ‘identification,’ rather than a stable state of ‘identity.’ (Hall, 2003; Marginson, 2014) Korean International Student were not only trying to identify who they were but also who they were becoming.

KIS’ living environment, especially in Korea, certainly mattered for their identity constructions. Living in Korea meant encountering dominant discourses in Korean society. In Korea, they faced dominant discourses defining who they were within the society, such as 학벌주의 [hakbeoljui meaning the hierarchizing based on the rank of a university a person entered] (Kim, 2004). Those discourses produced specific discursive practices which contributed to the creation of meanings individuals preferred to. Then those ‘preferred meanings’ implicitly led to how their identities were interpreted in Korea (Hall, 2006).

On top of their experiences in Korea, the transnationality of KIS’ lives crossing the national border made their identity constructions more complicated than living only in their home country. As a way to respond to dominant discourses in Korea, they decided to study in the U.S. They were not satisfied with identity representations affected by the dominant discourses in Korea. Therefore, responding to those identity representations,

they moved to another environment where they expected to have an impact on their identity constructions. In addition, this change had an impact on how they constructed their identities. There were differences of dominant discourses between Korea and the U.S., such as between 학벌 [hakbeol] which had priority on the hierarchy of universities in Korea and racial ideology in the U.S., such as model minority myth and perpetual foreigner stereotypes. Because of the differences of dominant discourses between the two countries, the preferred meanings which affected the representations of the same person were also distinct between Korea and the U.S. In fact, most KIS did not expect those differences of preferred meanings for their identities between Korea and the U.S. They expected other differences which they wanted to make changes of their identities in the U.S. Expected and unexpected differences between the two countries coexisted leading to their complicated identity constructions in the U.S.

Therefore, this process of identity construction involved not only an external process but also their ‘internal’ (individual) process. KIS focused on what they thought of themselves and whom they wanted to be as “constituted within” their psyche, and not just the outside representation (Hall, 2003). In Korea, KIS interpreted (decoded) and responded to social discourses in their own ways, and their decision to leave for the U.S. was a way of their responding (Hall, 2006). In the U.S., KIS addressed the gap of ‘preferred meanings’ for their identities between the two countries in their own ways. Some KIS tried to close the gap. Another KIS tried to mix multiple representations of their identities, and other KIS tried to maintain the meanings preferred in Korea or assimilated themselves to the meanings preferred in the U.S. In addition, their ways of responding to the differences of preferred meanings changed depending on their

accumulated experiences in the U.S. Actually, KIS' identities played the role of "the meeting points" at which different criteria were encountered (Hall, 2003). At their identities, complicated "suturing" of various identity representations took place while they experienced various discourses in terms of education, English, social relationship, and culture (Hall, 2003). While preferred meanings as external elements had significant impacts on KIS' identity constructions, they were not fully determined by those meanings.

The dominant discourses were not only 'different,' but also historically 'related' to each other between Korea and the U.S. KIS' preferences of American cultures, such as English, American education, and American lifestyles were usually found in their thoughts about their imagined identities in the U.S. before their living abroad. These preferences were the main motivations to attract KIS to the U.S. Of course, the U.S. had occupied a superior position not only in the relationship with Korea but also in the international community. However, the U.S. has had a special relationship with Korea, especially since around the Cold War. However, the relationship had largely been unequal (Rhee, 2006). This imbalance of the international relationship between Korea and the U.S. could be the base layer of KIS' preferences of American cultures while individual KIS' agencies made the variations of their preferences.

This section of findings included KIS' narratives in transnational contexts between Korea and the U.S. In particular, these narratives showed how KIS lived in Korea, such as what made them decide to move to the U.S., what they expected about their lives and identities in the U.S., and how they struggled with the representations about their identities in the U.S. Overall, KIS' narratives in this section were displayed

following the time flow of their transnational experiences. However, some parts of their narratives were reconstructed regardless of the temporal order of their experiences to better illustrate what their narratives meant to themselves. In fact, KIS frequently connected their experiences in the U.S. with their previous experiences in Korea, rather than just describing them based on the temporal order.

유나 (Yoona)

Yoona had been in the U.S. for about eight years, studying in a U.S. high school and then U.S. university. As reflected in the quote above, Yoona was disappointed by her Korean homeroom teacher's low expectation of her academic performance. This contributed to her decision to transfer to a Christian high school in the U.S. after her freshman year in Korea. Yoona and her family lived in Seoul, Korea. At first, Yoona majored in music therapy at her university, but she changed her major into business marketing education and human resource with a minor of psychology. She is currently working at a Non-Government Organization (NGO) which has a headquarter in the U.S. after completing her Optional Practical Training (OPT) in the U.S.

Personal Character: Independent

Yoona represented herself as "independent." She said she disliked being interrupted by others, even by her parents. She usually did not easily follow what others asked her to do. Yoona's character has led to some troubles between her and her father in Korea. While it was not the main motivation, she wanted to stay away from her parents' control by staying in the U.S. Although Yoona got some help from a counseling company with her plan to study in the U.S. and her parents promised to support the costs of her living in the U.S., she made the decision to leave by herself.

Academic Achievement and Identity: “Low achiever” and “model student”

In Korea, high school students take a multiple practice exam to improve their scores. Yoona had a meeting before the end of her first year in a three-years high school system. One can imagine why test scores are stressed upon and how significant anticipated college enrollment is for students’ future career in Korean when learning that Yoona had to take a trial test and have career talks at the very early stage of her high school life. Yoona described the meeting with her Korean high school teacher:

I still remember what my homeroom teacher (in my Korean high school) told me in the meeting. The teacher said “With this [practice test] score, you would not be able to enter even Myeonghwa community college.” It was really shocking to me. (Yoona, 05/28/2019)

The quote above includes what Yoona’s homeroom teacher told her in an individual meeting to counsel her academic career, especially college application and how Yoona felt about the teacher’s statement in the meeting in Korea. The meeting was held right after Yoona received her score for her college entrance practice exam.

The teacher’s gaze was trying to define and control Yoona’s identity. In the quote above, the teacher looked down on Yoona’s academic potential. Yoona’s identity in her Korean high school could be significantly affected by what kind of gaze the teacher had. What the teacher said in the meeting to counsel Yoona’s college application should be considered as a type of ‘discursive practice’ reflecting the perspective of how the teacher viewed Yoona (Hall, 1997). In particular, Yoona’s Korean homeroom teacher created the ‘code’ for Yoona by connecting Yoona to the preferred meaning of the university which her teacher expected that Yoona would enter in the future. Encoding is the process of

producing such a code connecting a person, object, or concept with another meaning so that it can be called ‘meaning-making’ (Hall, 2006).

In actuality, it was difficult to limit the answer about Yoona’s identity to a single meaning because there were numerous meanings that could be connected to Yoona, not only her test score or a university. What kind of person was she in Korea? Yoona was interested in English. While she was not good at or uninterested in other subject matters, she studied English for fun, voluntarily, and confidently. Also, she loved to sing. In Korea, she had so much interest and skill in music that made her work in a choir. Furthermore, religion (Christianity) was very important for Yoona. In Korea, she had been attending church consistently and working in their choir. These meanings are such important criterion for Yoona that she took them into account when she had to make important life decisions in the U.S. However, the teacher she met in her first-year of Korean high school did not know and did not want to understand these meanings. Instead, the teacher adopted Yoona’s test score and the potential university where she could be admitted as a ‘preferred meaning’ to represent Yoona’s identity.

In fact, the teacher’s gaze which was seen in the meeting with Yoona was not only an individual gaze but also the gaze of the whole Korean society trying to control and define Yoona. The result of the trial test on which the teacher focused was important because it was believed to be connected with the test score of the actual college entrance exam. Then the test score of the actual college entrance exam would be equated with the college which Yoona could enter. Although there had been some changes, which university a person entered was still critical to one’s life in Korea. In Korea, a university was assigned with a certain rank which meant more than the university itself, and

affected the individual who attended that university. Yoona's homeroom teacher mentioned *전문대학* [jeonmoondaehak meaning a higher education institution similar to a community college in the U.S.], and it was ranked at the bottom of Korean universities. People from the same university, especially a few prestigious universities, maintained their own groups in society, excluding and discriminating against other people from lower ranked universities. In Korea, this university-centered factionism was called *학벌* [hakbeol]. This led to distinct differences in status among those who graduated from Seoul National University, ordinary four-year universities in Seoul, local four-year universities in other areas, and two-year community colleges. The discourse that those who attended Seoul National University were superior and that those who were enrolled at two-year community colleges were inferior had been a widely shared belief in Korea for decades. This discourse on the 'hierarchy' of universities reflected the 'power relations' among universities and their alumni in Korea. The 'social forces' of various academic fraction, *학벌* [hakbeol], were making up specific power relations among universities so that hegemony about the ranks of universities was formed and changed (Hall, 1986).

In Korea, people with high-ranking university backgrounds, such as Seoul National University, occupied positions in which they made socially important decisions, such as national government, business, and media (Kim, 2004). The discourse of university ranking worked in a generally favorable way for those from the higher-ranking university backgrounds. In addition, this discourse 'produced' many practices in everyday life in Korea (Hall, 1997). It was easy to find news articles including interviews with students who entered prestigious universities in the Korean media, advertisements

promising admission to prestigious universities from private academia, and a flat card with the names and number of students enrolled at top ranking universities at the entrance of high schools. Therefore, when Yoona's teacher said "You would not be able to enter even Myeonghwa community college," it can be interpreted as a discursive practice about the hierarchy among Korean universities produced within this broad context. It contained a preferred meaning about university ranks, which was influenced by social discourse and was spoken by an individual teacher.

학벌주의 [hakbeoljueui] has produced a kind of pseudo-race or pseudo-ethnicity based on different ranks among universities (Kim, 2015). People of a specific 학벌 [hakbeol] don't focus on their racial or ethnic background. Instead, they focus on whether they attended the same university and how high the ranking of their universities is. Within the same 학벌 [hakbeol], they made close relationship similar with the relationship among people of the same race or ethnicity. This is the reason how Koreans feel about their 학벌 [hakbeol]. Of course, it is true that there have been some improvements in terms of culture and system about the hierarchy among universities. However, people from the same university, especially those from the same high-ranking university, still occupy the upper part of organizations using their own network. At the same time, people from other universities are excluded and discriminated against. In this respect, the hierarchy among universities has produced a kind of class-related character in terms of their educational backgrounds. Therefore, what Yoona heard from her homeroom teacher in the meeting about college entrance admission was to locate Yoona as and represent her with a specific class based on her test score.

Yoona seriously decoded her teacher's gaze as the representation of herself (Hall, 2006). Yoona's decoding of her teacher's representation was reflected in her description of herself in Korea. In her interviews, she often described herself as a 'lower achieving student.' It was very shocking to her to hear from her homeroom teacher that she would not "be able to enter even Myonghwa Community College." Yoona interpreted her teacher's words in the meeting as meaning that her dream to professionally develop her career in English would not be able to come true in Korea. This also had another important meaning that defined herself in Korea. Yoona already knew the power of 학벌 [hakbeol meaning which university she would enter in Korean society]. The teacher's words became a critical point for Yoona to seek another option for her career, such as studying in the U.S. However, Yoona's test score was not even high enough to apply for a Korean community college, which was at a lower rank than the foreign language university she wanted to apply for.

A main reason Yoona decided to study in the U.S. was to change her identity surrounding academic achievement. Yoona thought that she could no longer be successful in her Korean high school in terms of academic achievement and could instead be competitive in an American high school. Here, we could see the unique perspective of Yoona's decoding of American education. Of course, as many Korean media represented the education of Western society, she perceived American education as *democratic education*. It means by democratic education that American education does not "inject" knowledge into students, acknowledges "diversified perspectives," and "does not make their students study only for college entrance exams." In that sense, it was an education that suited Yoona more than Korean education. On the other hand, American education

was also “easier education” for Yoona than Korean education. Yoona said “American students don’t study like Korean kids (fiercely)” and expected that they would spend less time studying than Korean students. Therefore, Yoona, as a student who was accustomed to the fierce competitiveness of Korean education, thought that she could be more successful in a U.S. school. Yoona’s imagination of herself at an American school was a good student.

Indeed, Yoona was able to be competitive in terms of academic achievement at her American high school. She was a student with a top grade at her American high school. For instance, the content of Yoona’s junior year math in an American high school was similar to what she had already learned in her 3rd year intensive course at her Korean middle school. In Korea, she was poor at math and she gave up learning math completely. However, because the content she was learning in her U.S. high school was at the same as or lower level than the math that she had already learned in Korea, she was able to motivate herself to study math with confidence. Yoona received an award given to top mathematics students at her high school in the United States. Ironically, Yoona was able to construct an academically successful identity at an American high school by using what she learned in her Korean education, which she hated and wanted to stay away from.

The changes in Yoona’s academic identity were not only affected by the differences in the curriculum between Korea and the United States but also different expectations of school members about her. Yoona thought that her American teachers were caring for her. Her American teachers encouraged, hugged, and prayed for her at her high school. Moreover, at her American high school, her classmates expected her to

be an academically “exemplary student” despite not being close to Yoona in terms of their social relationships. This was closely related to the way classmates saw her as a ‘model minority’ in the U.S. (Lee, 1996). Although it was not what Yoona expected before, it affected Yoona’s academic identity in a positive way. On the other hand, in Korea, Yoona was just judged and defined unilaterally by her Korean teachers based on her high school test scores. It was very interesting that Yoona was interpreted differently in Korea and the U.S.

English and Identity: “Proud” and “abnormal”

English meant a lot to Yoona in Korea. First, English was what Yoona was interested in. She experienced English at a private academy first. Yoona learned phonics at the academy and then she became able to use the principle to read English words. She had fun reading English. Yoona also encountered English education at her elementary school in Korea. Fortunately, the English class which she first encountered at her elementary school was taught in a way that Yoona was interested in. The teaching style for that class was unlike other subjects. she had a teacher who taught English in a fun way through the activity of listening and interpreting the music Yoona likes, especially pop songs.

Second, English was also an area where Yoona could show off her own skills. Yoona became interested in English through the positive educational experiences at her private academy and elementary school. Her English skills gradually improved as she studied it by herself without any external pressure. Even when she gave up most subject matters in her first year at her Korean high school, Yoona did not give up studying

English. She had fun studying English by herself and continued to study it hard. Therefore, Yoona achieved good grades on the school exams of English.

Third, English worked as a goal to guide Yoona's career path since she was interested and proficient in it. She wanted to go to a high school and a university specialized for learning a foreign language, especially English, but she could not make it because of her low grades at her Korean schools. After finishing school, Yoona dreamed of working for jobs related to English, such as an interpreter or working at international organizations. English influenced Yoona's career path because it was not just a personal characteristic, but it also worked to differentiate her from others and could be used as a capital or "a unique selling point." Moreover, since Yoona was being evaluated negatively for her school grades, which is a very important criterion for defining individuals, especially students in Korean society, she might need something to prove her worth besides her school grades. English was an ideal tool for that purpose in the context of Korean society.

While English was personally meaningful to Yoona, English also had sociological meanings in Korea. The trend of preoccupation with English in the whole Korean society started to accelerate when the Korean government began to actively accept globalization. In 1997, English was included in the national curriculum as an official subject. While the vast majority of Koreans speak Korean, the only foreign language that was included in the official and compulsory curriculum of the entire country was English. In addition, English became a popular commodity, not only in public education but also in the private education market. Yoona came into contact with English at her private academy, and this demonstrates how popular English was in the private education market. Dominant

discourses about English promoted Korean society to introduce many practices surrounding English, such as studying in English-speaking countries. The influence of the U.S. and its dominant language, English, was considerable even since the U.S. military temporarily ruled the post-war Korean society. Through this historical process, the influence of English had become quite strong in Korea, and English had a power not only in education but also in all other areas of Korean's everyday lives.

Under these conditions, it was likely that English was preferred to being used to define an individual's value and identity. When evaluating an individual in Korean society, the distinction between those who can speak English well and those who cannot speak English was powerful. It could be similar to and as prevalent as the distinction between those who have good grades in school and those who do not. It seemed certain that Yoona was interested in English. However, the context of the Korean society mentioned above was too critical to view her preference for English as a personal interest only. Yoona also said that the reason why she studied English hard was not only her personal interest but also "I think it was because I wanted to be acknowledged and applauded." There was enough room for Yoona to interpret the meaning of English as not only personal but also social.

The Korean education system did not fully support her effort to improve her English skills. For her future career, Yoona wanted to improve her English by going to an English-specialized high school but they were very competitive in Korea. The requirements for admission to those schools were not limited to English. Students had to have excellent grades overall. Yoona thought that it would be difficult to improve her English proficiency in the Korean education system. Improving English skills through

private tutoring was another option, but Yoona decided to study in an English-speaking country. Yoona expected that she would be able to easily develop her English skills in the United States. Yoona described how she imagined her life in the U.S.:

I thought, by myself, like “Oh, I like English. So, it is good to think of studying in the U.S. as just taking an intensive English class. ... And I wanted to go to a foreign language high school, but I couldn’t attend because my grades were bad in my middle schools. So, I’d go to the U.S. instead of going to a foreign language high school. Then I might be able to work at U.N. later.” I decided to study abroad with a big dream. (Yoona, 05/28/19)

Among various meanings, Yoona decoded studying in the U.S. in relation to “English” (Hall, 2006). In fact, the U.S. could be interpreted in many different ways, including multiculturalism and racism. However, Yoona narrowed down the meaning of studying in the U.S. as “instead of English intensive classes” or “foreign language high school.” This was to simplify the U.S. in the ‘educational’ sense. “Learning English” became Yoona’s preferred meaning for studying in the U.S., rather than seeing many other meanings that would result from living in the U.S., such as issues about “social relations” and “race.” This representation of the U.S. as a place for learning English was seen in not only Yoona’s narrative but also the narratives of most other research participants.

Although the personal weight of English in their stories seemed different, most of the research participants referred to “improving English proficiency” as one of the goals of their studying in the U.S. When Yoona described the U.S. as an “intensive English program”, the relationship between the U.S. and Yoona was depicted as the relationship between the service provider of English education and a consumer of the education

services. Under this relationship between a supplier and a consumer, Yoona's identity during her time studying in the U.S. was represented as a person living a very easy and positive life. In the notion of U.S. life, Yoona paid for English language education services and the U.S. would provide her with services which were selectively chosen, preventing her from any particular difficulties.

However, in Yoona's actual experiences of studying in the U.S., the meaning of English was different from what she imagined before her time studying in the U.S. Yoona said, "Before, I thought 'English' as a specialized field, which is a far-off from daily life, but (after my experiences of studying in the U.S.) it came to be a 'life' that is already used so easily in a real life." Before her studying in the U.S., Yoona considered English only as an object or content of learning. English was an 'educational content' that needed to be learned through public and private education. Moreover, English was a skill that could be improved through education. In addition, it had the meaning of a useful tool that could be used for one's future career development. However, after her studying in the U.S., English became more "basic" than something "special" or additional. It also meant that English was a kind of inherent characteristic and the gap of English skills between native and foreign people was hard to overcome through education. In the U.S., in almost every situation, everyone communicated in English. Therefore, in American society, English was no longer 'English,' as a special language, but 'a normal word.' For Yoona, 'studying' English in the U.S. became 'living' with English in the U.S.

In American society, where English was no longer a "special skill," but a "basic" one, Yoona was perceived as a person who could not easily accomplish the basic skill. In her workplace for her Optional Practical Training, Yoona thought that his coworkers

would be thinking of her as “a very strange person.” Confidently, naturally, and appropriately speaking English in various situations should have been already developed through high school education. Those tasks were just what normal people with a normal degree of cognitive ability could and had to do. It meant that these were the basic skills to have. However, Yoona thought that she could not sometimes perform those basic things as successfully as her colleagues. This was the reason why Yoona worried that her colleagues would think of her as a strange person.

Yoona was very seriously aware of the gaze of others in terms of her English skills in the U.S. In Korea, the others’ gazes based on her academic achievement bothered Yoona. She moved from Korea to the U.S. to avoid those gazes and negative identities in Korea. However, in the United States, another gaze, which was based on English skills, took the place of the gaze based on academic achievement. The new gaze was also affecting Yoona’s perception of herself. She recognized herself as an outstanding person in terms of English skills in Korea. However, through living in the U.S., Yoona came to think of herself as an inferior and very strange person in terms of English even though she had the same or better English skills than she did in Korea.

Social Relationship and Identity: “Bullied,” “sociable,” and “socially awkward”

Yoona perceived herself as a “sociable” person in Korea. For her, being “sociable” meant her high capacity for making close relationships with people, being seen as someone that people could reach out to easily, and they felt comfortable for her. As Yoona thought, others perceived her as a sociable or comfortable person in Korea. For example, Yoona talked about how sociable she was:

[In Korea,] I thought I was a very sociable person and I was able to get close to people. Also, I thought that people were able to approach me easily. ... In (American) high school... I wanted to make a lot of foreign [American] friends. I wanted to be completely absorbed into them. I wanted to show them how active and fun I had been in Korea (in terms of social relationships). I wanted to be recognized as a friend (by American students). (Yoona, 05/28/19)

At the same time, in Korea, Yoona differentiated herself from those who looked socially awkward to her. In her mind, there was a hierarchy of social relationship skills between sociable students like herself and socially awkward people. Yoona had the perception that sociable people were superior to socially awkward people, in terms of social relationships. Based on this hierarchy, it was reasonable that she ignored those people because it would not be fun to hang out with them.

The essential image of a sociable person could be Yoona's own self-representation, rather than a fact. Her perception of her identity in relation to social relationships in Korea could be "fictive unity" (Hall, 2003: p. 16). Despite her self-representation in Korea as a "sociable" person, Yoona experienced bullying when she attended an elementary school in Korea. Those experiences of being bullied taught her how to make social relationships. Therefore, she felt comfortable making social relationships in Korea. Moreover, Yoona did not have many American friends with whom she was still keeping in touch with, and she said that "I have narrow, but deep relationships" in Korea. Actually, she was 'not constantly' sociable even in Korea.

It seemed that Yoona's past identity of social relationships was layered and sutured with her recent experiences about social relationships in the U.S. Before she went

to study abroad, she was not aware of her identity surrounding social relationships in Korea. Her social relationships were “not on her radar” because they were as easy, comfortable, and natural “as breathing” for her when she lived in Korea. However, when she faced challenges about making American friends in the U.S., she came to compare her previous social relationships in Korea with her current relationships, especially relationships with White American students in the U.S. Finally, Yoona’s interpretation of her social relationships in the U.S. could contribute to the positive reconstruction of her previous identity surrounding social relationships than how she actually had them in Korea.

Yoona positively decoded the potential differences she would encounter in the U.S. Therefore, she thought that living in a different environment and meeting different people from those she knew in Korea would be exciting. In addition, Yoona expected that she would play an active role in her U.S. life, rather than a passive role like she had in Korea.

What made Yoona construct this kind of fantasy about her identity of social relationships in the U.S.? First, she had not experienced U.S. life yet. Additionally, she did not have any problems with her social relationships in Korea. Yoona’s comfortable feeling about making social relationships in Korea could have been extended into her imagination of social relationships in the U.S. later. Second, her simple understanding of U.S. life could contribute to her positivity. In particular, Yoona simplified U.S. life into participating in an “intensive English program,” focusing on an educational aspect. Therefore, for her, it was sure that her U.S. life would be successful unless there was any problem with learning English. Third, Yoona did not think of other critical aspects of her

U.S. life, such as race. She did not connect her racial status with the challenges she would encounter in the U.S.

Yoona's American friends in her high school encoded Yoona as a 'model minority' who came from an Asian country (Lee, 1996). They thought that she would have traditional Asian characteristics, such as being quiet, serious, and hard working. Interestingly, this expectation was quite different from what Yoona thought of herself in terms of social relationships in Korea. As we saw earlier in the finding section, Yoona was not confident in her academic achievement in Korea; however, she thought she liked to talk and she was pretty good at talking to people.

Yoona focused on her 'linguistic' characteristic, especially in terms of English, to find the reason why she was experiencing challenges to making social relationships in the U.S. While the model minority myth is a kind of 'racial' stereotype that other racial groups have toward Asians in the U.S., she did not think of the critical aspect, race. In particular, she focused on her 'individual disability' of talking with American students in English, rather than dominant discourses or preferred meanings, such as race, within US society.

Although Yoona did not focus on race to understand her experiences with social relationships in the U.S., there was a significant difference in her racial status between Korea and the U.S. In Korea, almost all people are Asian, especially Korean, and it is hard to find other racial or ethnic populations. Yoona, as a racial and ethnic majority in Korea, did not have any experience making social relationships with people of different racial backgrounds. However, in the U.S., she suddenly came to belong to a racial minority group while not being familiar with using a racial lens to understand her

experiences, such as the difficulties of making social relationships in the U.S. Although her racial status changed with her transnational journey to the U.S., her perspective on her experiences in the U.S. remained the same, mainly in terms of color-blindness, as how she understood herself in Korea (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). She had not yet gotten used to a racial code which was preferred in the U.S.

Based on how she interpreted the problem of her social relationships in the U.S., Yoona tried various ways to close the gap between who she was in Korea and how her American peers understood her in the U.S. She wanted to recover the sociable identity that she thought she had in Korea. First, to close the gap of identity, she focused on improving her linguistic ability, especially in English. Yoona made an effort to learn English by “shadowing” her American friends and paying attention to how they spoke English and how they used humor.

Second, she joined various activities which her American peers were participating in. She thought that what she showed those peers was not her real identity. Through those experiences, Yoona was getting tired of displaying what others, especially American students, liked, rather than what she thought who she really was. Yoona felt that those activities were only another type of “work,” rather than hanging out with friends. In her university, Yoona also did her best to make American friends, but it made her grow tired of disguising herself as what her American friends preferred to see. It fit their friends’ ideal image of a sociable person, but it did not fit who she really was in Korea.

Yoona accidentally found a space where she felt connected to American students: a choir class. Music, like English, was an area where Yoona felt confident and interested. She had many experiences about music through her activities at the choir in her Korean

church since her childhood. While Yoona was proud of her musical ability, she had not thought of it as a tool to help her make social relationships in the U.S. After her activities at the choir classes in her U.S. high school, she registered for a choir class every semester. The reason why Yoona liked the class was that it made her feel more confident and she felt like she belonged in the class more than other classes or activities. Therefore, music came to have more meanings, not only as her personal hobby but also as a useful tool to help her adjust to her U.S. high school community. Furthermore, Yoona decided to major in music therapy in her university to extend the meaning of music into her career path. She also believed that it would be a good opportunity to help those who had any problems which could be solved by music therapy.

사라 (Sara)

Sara lived in Korea until her second grade of elementary school, and then moved to Tennessee in the U.S. with her family. They lived there from Sara's elementary third grade to sixth grade. She then returned to Korea and attended a middle school. Sara returned to the U.S. for a high school. After high school, she attended Midwest University. Currently Sara is working at a company in Korea. She has lived in a transnational way between Korea and the U.S. more than other research participants in this study.

Sara's family consisted of four members, her father, mother, older sister, and herself. Her father came to the U.S. to study when she was in third grade in her elementary school. Sara's father was a teacher, and, at that time, he was selected as a scholarship recipient by the Korean government for a study abroad program which sent Korean teachers for their professional development in U.S. graduate schools. He came to

the U.S. with all of his family members to study at a graduate program in Tennessee. That was the formal reason for his studying abroad, but the informal and real reason was the education of his children. Sara believed that her father struggled with many challenges in the U.S. only for his children's education.

Personal Character: A leader

Sara understood herself as a person who loved spending time with people and enjoyed leading groups. She had been proactively contacting friends and proposing private meetings with them. This representation of her personality was the evaluation of Sara by both herself and others, such as her sister and friends. Her sister, who noticed the strength of her personality, also suggested that Sara found a career in which making social relationships with people was significant. Sara's personality was revealed in her school life and in her usual social relationships. She had many experiences as the leader of various clubs from middle and high school to university.

Academic Achievement and Identity: "Not excellent," "first or second place," and "right the middle"

In Korea, Sara identified herself as "not excellent" in terms of academic achievement when she was in elementary school. This academic identity was based on comparison with other students. In particular, her mother had lower academic expectations of Sara relative to her older sister. That was the reason why her mother "gave up" supporting Sara's study in Korean schools. In contrast, Sara's older sister was perceived as 'excellent' in terms of academic achievement not only in Korea but also in the U.S. Her sister attended a middle school in Tennessee, where her father's graduate school was located. Then she was able to enter an American high school and prestigious

university in the U.S. (Yale for undergraduate and Northwestern for graduate education) while receiving a scholarship fully sponsored by a state government and school, which covered all costs of her U.S. education.

When Sara talked about her school grades, she usually mentioned her older sister. While Sara had her own career plan, her older sister was considered as the significant object of comparison in terms of academic achievement. Sara discussed the issue in this way:

I haven't studied hard since I was young. So, my parents have given up on me. Since my older sister always won first place, my parents were growing their expectation for her. But they said to me "You are good" even when I made a little effort. (Sara, 05/31/19)

Sara and her older sister belonged to different and binary categories between 'excellent' and 'not excellent' students. The familial and local context contributed to reinforcing the importance of academic achievement in Sara's identities in Korea. Like most middle-class families in Korea, her parents strongly focused on and invested lots of resources for their children's education (Park, 2009). While Sara's parents did not invest much for Sara's education, they made a huge effort for her older sister's education. Sara's family moved from Bundang to Gangnam for her sister's education. In Gangnam, which was famous for the competitiveness of its school district, parents were extremely involved in their children's education. Sara's parents spent a lot of money for the education of Sara's older sister, such as expensive private tutoring even though their financial condition did not allow them to invest much money in their children's education. Sara remembered that her father brought a new workbook to give it to her sister almost everyday.

The investment for children's education in Sara's family was expanded to a global context. Therefore, Sara's parents supported not only their children's education in Korean schools but also other educational experiences, such as the enhancement of their global competences. They used all of their resources to help Sara and her older sister to improve their English skills or experience U.S. education. Sara's family moved to Tennessee, the U.S. not only for her father's graduate education but also the educational experiences of Sara and her older sister. These efforts of Sara's parents for their children had various meanings across multiple levels, familial, national, and global.

When Sara returned to Korea from Tennessee, it was difficult to construct a positive academic identity at her Korean middle school because of the linguistic and cultural differences between Korea and the U.S. schooling. In the U.S., Sara had communicated in English when playing with friends or taking classes for about four years. Therefore, she felt it was awkward for her to suddenly use Korean for her studies and social relationships even in Korea.

Sara's academic performance had improved considerably as she experienced progress with her cultural adaptation and friendships in the second year of her middle school. She tried to get involved in a collectivistic culture at her school and found an appropriate place for realizing her leader identity at her school. She actively led some student groups, such as by becoming the class leader.

Sara decided to change the environment from Korea to the U.S. for developing her identity related to academic achievement and future career. Although her transition from the U.S. to Korea was somewhat successful, she still felt that she did not fit Korea in terms of academic identity. Sara decoded herself as a person who was more

comfortable studying in English than Korean even though she made some progress during her time of Korean middle school. Moreover, she expected that there would be more opportunities and choices in U.S. education.

At the beginning of her American high school life, she faced challenges in adapting herself to the culture of U.S. high school, which were similar to the difficulties of cultural transition in her Korean middle school. She did not have serious difficulties with language at her American high school, but she thought there were differences of values between American schools and Korean schools. Although she had some experiences in U.S. education before, it was not easy to readapt to U.S. high school culture. On the one hand, Sara was seen as 'inherently' passive and selfless by her American classmates. On the other hand, Sara thought her selflessness was 'acquired' by Korean collectivistic culture which forced individuals to hide their unique personality at her Korean middle school. She tried to find and develop her positive personality. At the beginning of her American high school life, she did not have many relationships so that she could have enough time to study by herself. Her efforts to develop a unique personality and improve her academic achievement led to her classmates' recognition of her positive identities.

At her American university, Sara felt that it was difficult to establish a positive academic identity because of language, especially English writing, and fierce competition within her academic department. First, while Sara also faced some challenges at her American high school, those were related to cultural adaptation only at the beginning of her U.S. high school life. Actually, she felt more comfortable studying in English than in Korean. Sara did not find any negative feedback about her English writing in other

classes at the same university until one day in one of her major classes. She had a shocking experience when a professor gave a harsh comment (“bad writing”) on her assignment. While the class was well known for its severity, the direct comment she received on her report was very shocking. Sara had to continue taking similar major classes afterwards, so she had no choice but to make an effort by herself to get better evaluation than before without understanding how to deal with the class, since the instructor did not provide any feedback on how to improve her writing.

Second, the academic climate of her department was not as easy and caring as she expected. At the relatively small high school she attended, Sara was an excellent student in her studies competing for first or second place in her class. However, her academic capacity seemed to be at the intermediate level in the entire department. The department she chose was a competitive place where academically excellent students were admitted from different locations throughout the U.S. The university department did not care for individual students as much as Sara’s high school did. When Sara entered the department, she had a lot of attachment to it because she believed her academic major was closely related to what she wanted to realize for her dream. She did her best for her study which meant only sleeping 2 or 3 hours a day to complete her coursework, but it caused her to burn out and she could not get the excellent grades that she originally expected. Sara became upset because the department pushed her to make academic progress without caring for her which did not fit her notion of the American education dream.

English and Identity: “American child,” “too boring,” and “bad writing”

Sara’s early experiences of U.S. life became the foundation for her preference of English. In Tennessee, she was close to an “American child” in terms of language. She

stayed and attended 3rd through 6th grade in a U.S. elementary school. Of course, at first, she felt unfamiliar with Tennessee because the environment was different from where she lived in Korea. Before her life in Tennessee, Sara lived in Seoul, the capital of Korea, which was a huge city with a population of about 10 million, whereas Tennessee was in the countryside. At the beginning of her days in Tennessee, Sara mostly stayed at home and watched TV. She gradually got used to living in Tennessee and actively enjoyed it by playing in nature or going to her friends' houses to spend all night together. For example, Sara shared:

I used to run around on the grass with American kids. It was a countryside (in Tennessee). ... I usually hung out with American kids when I was in American elementary school. So, I was an American at that time. I dreamed in English and forgot how to speak Korean..... (Sara, 05/31/21)

Through this active life in Tennessee, she could have improved her English communication skills with her American friends. She sometimes even dreamed in English and forgot how to speak Korean. Sara almost thought of herself as an “American child” at that time.

Sara's familiarity with English played a significant role in her thinking about studying in the U.S. later. She came back to the U.S. in order to study at a high school because she felt more comfortable studying in English than in Korean. Even after studying in a Korean middle school for three years, she decided that it would be better for her to study at an American school because of her comfortability with English.

In the U.S., Sara decoded her English-related identity as the location between other Korean international students and American students. She felt different not only

from American students but also other Korean international students at her university in terms of English writing skills. For instance, the writing course designed for international students at her university seemed “easy” and “boring” for her. The differentiation between herself and other international students was based on Sara’s educational experiences in her U.S. elementary and high school. The assumption underlying the writing course for international students was that international students did not have the knowledge about basic English writing skills. However, Sara’s prior experiences in U.S. schools contributed to her knowledge and familiarity with English writing. For example, she was familiar with certain conventions such as how to make an argument for a writing topic, how to find relevant research articles to support the thesis statement of their studies, and how to start a paragraph. Other KIS research participants also did not feel necessary to take a writing course for international students. Sara felt that the writing course was repeating those knowledge and practices about English writing. She also found that the writing course was easy for her while it seemed that other students had difficulties with the same course. Sara was comfortable, but there were KIS not feeling comfortable using English in the writing course.

In Korea, Sara was recognized as an English teacher. Almost every summer break, she visited Korea to work as an English teacher at a private academy. She was making money working as a full-time English instructor eight hours a day Monday through Friday. Her workplace was located in Daechi-dong which was well-known for competitive private education. Thus, ‘English instructor’ was one of the ways others saw Sara, especially in Korea.

However, her U.S. university tried to encode Sara as a “bad writer” in one of her English writing intensive classes. How others, especially her American professor, saw Sara in terms of English writing was quite different from other perspectives, including how she considered herself, how she defined herself separating herself from other international students, how others in Korea thought of Sara’s English skills, and how she was understood in different classes in her university, such as literature class. She remembered how she was recognized in one of her major classes:

When I wrote lab reports in this class, the professor always gave bad comments on my report saying “Bad writing” ... That’s why I felt hopeless about English writing. (I thought) “Oh, (my writing) is not clear. What can I do for that? How can I solve it?” (Sara, 06/15/21)

In addition, through taking this course about writing a lab report and reflecting on her experiences in the course, especially the comment of “bad writing,” Sara started to accept herself as a person who had not learned English in the right way. Based on her experience in the writing intensive class, she began drawing a clear boundary between her and American students. She did not belong to the group of ‘good writers’ because she had not learned English in the right way, such as learning a formal grammar of English. Instead, she had learned English based on how she listened to Americans. She gradually found that it was the wrong, or at least imperfect, way to learn English. Now, Sara did not feel comfortable studying in English as much as before. Even she felt hopeless because there was not enough support to develop her English skills to make her a good writer. The comments on her lab report were just “bad writing” or “What?” There was nothing she could do.

Culture and Identity: “Harmony” and “back and forth”

Sara had transnational experiences between Korea and the U.S. since her childhood. Currently, Sara is working at a company in Korea. This transnationality of her life experiences led to her comparison between Korean cultures and American cultures. She shared her career plan based on her transnational experiences:

I think it's better to mix them together. To be honest, I think it's better to go to school in the U.S. when people are young. When they are young, it's important to respect people and learn values. In the period of middle school, it will be good to study in Korea. Before they enter a university, I think it's good to do study in the U.S. ... If people have their own values (in U.S. elementary schools), I think people need to learn how people study hard here [Korean middle schools] ... in the hard-working atmosphere. It's better to prepare for U.S. colleges at U.S. high schools. (Sara, 07/21/19)

Sara sought to “mix” the cultures and systems of Korea and the U.S. for advancing her education and professional development. Sara attended a Korean elementary school first and second grades while studying at an American elementary school for the rest of her elementary education. Then she entered a Korean middle school, and she returned to the U.S. to attend an American high school and university. Through these experiences, Sara found that both societies, Korea and the U.S., had valuable characteristics she could use for her own purposes.

Generally, at first, Sara thought that American cultures were superior to Korean ones. For example, she thought that the culture of American corporations was ‘better’ than the one of Korean corporations. Sara’s prioritization of employment in the U.S. over

Korea was related to this perception of the cultures of corporations between two countries. First, Sara thought that Korean corporates tended to avoid paying the right wages for workers' labor requiring them to satisfy their time and energy in the name of 열정페이 [yeolcheong pay], whereas in American companies, although it varies by fields, even in the case of internship, they generally paid reasonable wages to their employees. Second, she also thought that U.S. corporations had a somewhat flexible working hour system, while the flexibility of working hours was low at Korean companies and there was a culture of working uniformly during the same time. Third, in terms of the requirement of employment, many Korean companies required standardized qualifications, such as test scores and certificates, but in the U.S., corporates did not require such uniform qualifications. Ironically, Sara is now working at a Korean company even though she preferred the culture of American companies over Korean ones.

Sara had mostly positive perspectives on American cultures while representing Korean cultures as negative cultures. In her thoughts about two cultures, American cultures were interpreted as “diversity,” “freedom,” “respect for individuals,” “open-mindedness,” and “reasonable” while Korean cultures were understood as “uniformity,” “oppression,” and “unreasonableness.” These representations of Korean and American cultures were hierarchical discrimination, rather than neutral differences. In addition, Sara's initial perspectives on American culture could be understood as ‘Occidentalism’ (Lary, 2006). Western, especially American, cultures were being described in specific ways from a person living in an oriental country, Korea. Not only by individuals but also by the whole Korean society, positive discourses and representations about American cultures were produced, and Sara also perceived the power of those discourses on her

understanding of American cultures. For her and for Korean society, American cultures were seen as solutions to resolve the problems in Korea. These representations were ‘special’ because they were constructed under special history between Korea and the U.S.

Sara’s initial understanding of American cultures was based on the binary between Korean and American cultures. She believed that American culture was different from Korean culture. For her, there was a clear boundary between Korean and American cultures. They were fixed. Both Korean culture and American culture were singular even though one was positive and the other was not. Sara thought Korean mass media and entertainment programs had been creating those binary representations implicitly affecting her understanding of the relationship between those two cultures.

However, the accumulation of Sara’s lived experiences in American cultures started to break her binary notion of Korean and American cultures. The more living experiences she had, the more differences she could find within American culture. For instance, she was aware that the most serious social problem in the U.S. was the gap between the rich and the poor. This understanding came from her own experiences about the disparities of her diverse American friends in different areas of the U.S. (Tennessee and Illinois) during her elementary and high school years. Sara sometimes visited their homes and she recognized the differences in their home environments. In general, the parents’ occupations in rich families were practitioners, such as doctors or business persons, with high incomes. They enthusiastically supported their children’s education, and those children were well motivated. On the other hand, the parents’ occupational statuses in poor families were unstable. In addition, they took their poor financial conditions for granted while not expecting high achievement for their children.

Furthermore, poor families had continuous histories of poverty dating back to their ancestors. From these experiences with the gap, Sara could have changed her perspective on American culture. American cultures were not singular. Instead, American cultures consisted of various aspects, including not only positive but also negative aspects. The boundary between Korean cultures as negative and American cultures as positive became slightly blurred because she witnessed serious and negative problems in American society as well as Korean society. The social problem in the U.S. led Sara to see American society as an unideal place to settle down for a long time. While she still had positive views on U.S. society, American culture was becoming less attractive to live and belong to. Now, she considers U.S. society as a good place only for her 'early' career, rather than staying for her 'whole' life. She wanted to have 'flexible and double' cultural citizenship in U.S. culture and Korean culture, rather than fixed and singular cultural citizenship (Ong, 1993, 1996).

Social Relationships and Identity: “Perfectly American kid,” “challenges in adaptation,” “feeling distant from White American students in Midwest,” “hanging out with KIS,” “making some Asian American friends,” and “president”

Sara encountered the challenges of social relationships through her transnational life between Korea and the U.S. three times. Although she was very sociable and had many experiences of playing the role of leader, she needed to culturally understand what meant to be a good, at least not bad person in the group first. First, she felt that it was difficult to make social relationships when she started middle school in Korea. Sara attended a Korean middle school after spending four years in a U.S. school. At the beginning of her middle school life, she struggled to adapt to a Korean school culture

different from her previous American school. Through her early experiences of Korean middle school, she came to understand that there was a collectivistic culture in her Korean school. Therefore, Sara adapted to the Korean school culture by “hiding her authentic identity,” rather than showing who she was in a unique way. For example, she tried to match her appearance to other students by following the same fashion style. Of course, Sara didn’t think it was right to hide herself and follow a uniform rule, but she had to follow the culture in order to make her school life smooth. However, this disguise of her personality did not mean that Sara completely suppressed all of her identities. After adjusting to the collectivistic culture, she was able to appeal her leadership as her unique personality at her Korean school while leading some student groups actively. Leadership positions, such as the class leader, were good spaces for her to positively express her personality. Fortunately, her friends began to recognize Sara due to her leadership at school. Sara’s academic performance improved a lot along with the progress of her social friendships since the second year of her middle school.

Again, Sara needed to adjust her social relationship-related identity when she moved to her American high school in Illinois. She faced similar challenges of adaptation in her American high school life even though she felt comfortable communicating in English due to her previous experience in Tennessee. Sara thought there were differences of ‘preferred meanings’ of cultural values between American schools and Korean schools. In Korea, it was emphasized to fit a collectivistic culture, rather than expressing one’s own personality and voice. In her Korean school, Sara also focused on hiding her own individuality in order to adapt to that culture by following what many students valued in Korea. It didn’t allow her time to think about herself. On the other hand, in her

American high school, it was preferred that students have their own characters. Sara, who was accustomed to Korean culture tailoring herself to the whole culture and hiding her uniqueness through her middle school, was not recognized as a normal person by her classmates early in her American high school life. American students thought of her as a passive, quiet, selfless, unattractive, and uninteresting person. When Sara encountered opportunities to introduce herself in her high school, she was embarrassed because she was not sure how to introduce herself to other students. In her early high school days, a problem that was more serious than loneliness was that she did not know about herself while other students seemed to understand about themselves very well. Therefore, she tried to think about herself alone and could finally have better knowledge about herself, such as her personality and future goals. Also, Sara gradually began to recover her positive personality and took the role of leading a group among her American friends. She participated in clubs such as the National Honor Society, Math Competition Club, and Science Club. Within those groups, she worked as a class officer, chair, president, and leader. Furthermore, she was able to study longer by herself than she had been able to in Korea, and this change improved her academic performance. Through these efforts and changes, American students increasingly recognized Sara as a model student and a fun and attractive person.

However, at her American university, it was less easy for Sara to realize her identity as a group leader than at her high school. She talked about her social relationships at Midwest University:

When I was in Chicago [American high school], I had good relationships.

However, students here (in Midwest) were exclusive even when I approached

them. They [White Americans in Midwest] hung out within their group. I tried a lot at first, and then I just thought that it was okay to play within my group [of Korean international students in my department]. I felt like (the difference of students' attitude between Chicago and Midwest) while I had really close relationships with Korean friends. The three of us [Korean international students] always went around like this before. But, now, I'm so close to them [Asian American students in my department]. I hang out with them personally. We go to the theater, do barbecue, and go to each other's house a lot. (Sara, 05/31/21)

Although Sara had some challenges in social relationships at the beginning of her Korean middle school and American high school, she finally succeeded in establishing her leader identity in both cultural groups. She recognized the differences of environments for her as an Asian to make social relationships with White Americans between Illinois and Midwest University. There was a kind of racial identity requirement even though Sara and others at Midwest University did not explicitly mention it. Sara already had some experiences in making relationships with American students at her elementary and high schools in the U.S. In her American high school, she served as a leader in various clubs and was recognized as an academically excellent and fun student by her American friends. Therefore, at her university, Sara also expected that she could build relationships with American students, but it was somewhat 'limited.' In her high school in Chicago, she could see diverse races of students, and they approached her as an Asian first. Therefore, at a small private girls' school, Sara got along with them like "sisters." However, compared to Illinois, it was difficult to establish relationships with American students, especially White students in Midwest University. She sometimes approached

them first, but they tended not to accept her in their group while they played “exclusively” within their own groups.

To establish her leader identity, Sara needed to find alternative areas of social relationships in Midwest University. Instead of making relationships with White students, Sara was able to build relationships with other Korean international students within the same department. There were three other Korean international students in the department until her third year, and they always did everything together in their school. Sara perceived differences in personality and culture from her Korean friends first. Before their U.S. university lives, one of her Korean friends in the department had lived in Germany and the had other lived in Korea. However, after getting used to and adapting to each other’s styles, they began to develop close relationships. Then Sara shared almost all of her everyday life in her university, such as meals, working on assignments, and preparation for class exams all night, with her Korean international friends.

From that foundation of her social relationships with Korean students, she could expand her social relationships into Asian American students. Meanwhile, the relationship between Sara and her Asian American friends in her department began to grow during her third year at the university. One day, an Asian American student who she had become friends with by being in the same class, brought her other Asian American friends within the same department into their meeting. Then Sara also brought her Korean international students to the meeting. Since that gathering, the two groups have started meeting together. At the beginning of their relationships, they focused on helping each other with their homework, but after that, the relationship developed into

getting close to each other personally, which they did by watching movies, barbecuing together outside of school, and going to each other's houses.

Still, Sara felt that it was necessary to reveal her leader identity in a bigger and public group beyond her private groups of Korean and Asian American friends. Based on her confidence in her leadership through her experiences leading various student clubs at her Korean middle school and American high school, she also actively participated in a student club at her university. In particular, she felt strongly about belonging to KASA (Korean American Scientist Association). Most members of the club were Korean international students at the Midwest University, and they aimed to help Korean international students majoring in engineering through diverse events and activities. For instance, in KASA, Sara held a welcoming party for incoming Korean international students and mentoring programs for Korean international students in the science and engineering field at Midwest University. Sara became the head of the PR team in the first year, the vice president the following year, and the president since fall 2019 at the club. Sara felt very rewarded when she saw the participants taking something meaningful in their events she operated. There was the limitation for being a leader at her American university, but she found alternative ways to realize her authentic identity.

다나 (Dana)

Dana entered Midwest University in the fall semester of 2017. She had completed her sophomore year at the time of her first interview with me. Dana graduated from a private high school in New York. In Korea, she completed her first semester of high school, and then she studied English at a language program in New York for about three months before she entered a New York high school. Dana was majoring in economics

and minoring in sociology while exploring and considering adding another minor related to the study of animals. There were five members in her family in all: her father, mother, older sister, older brother, and her. Her sister lived with her husband in New York after graduating from a college in the same city. Therefore, Dana lived in her sister's house during her high school life. All of her other family members are currently living in Daejeon, Korea.

Personal Character: Careful

Dana had a cautious personality. In particular, she was quite worried about her new life in the United States. When Dana talked about her concerns with cooking rice, doing laundry, and making friends at U.S. high school, her mother told her that she was overly worried about things. Additionally, Dana had not decided her academic major when she entered her university because she did not know what she wanted to study. It seemed to her that there were too many factors to consider while she also felt that she did not have enough information or experiences with those majors. Furthermore, Dana thought that she did not like to try new things. She preferred those things that she was used to.

Academic Achievement and Identity: “Ranked 300th,” “honor student,” “international student,” and “International Student Representative”

In Korea, the preferred meaning to define Dana's identity was ‘academic achievement’ (Hall, 2006). Dana remembered well how her mother responded to her academic achievement in her Korean middle school. She explained:

I used to hear that I was good at studying until elementary school. By the way, in the first test in my middle school, I got 300th place out of about 600 to 700

students. According to my mom, my older sister and older brother studied better than me until their middle school. So, for my mom, this is the first score she had ever had from her children. My mom said, "Are you already in the 300th place? You're in the first grade of middle school yet." (Dana, 6/05/19)

According to Dana's own understanding of her elementary school years, she was considered as a good student because of her excellent academic achievement. However, when Dana was in first grade at her middle school, she was ranked 300th out of about 600 or 700 students in the whole school. Her mother compared her school rank with the ranks of her older sister and brother and said, "I have never seen this grade before." Dana was identified as a good or bad student by her family and school depending on her academic achievement.

The criteria, academic achievement, was 'dominant' not only in her family but also other spheres of Korean society. Therefore, negative representations were put on by not only her mother but also others, such as her mother's friends. In those representations, academic achievement was the most preferred meaning to define Dana's identity in Korea (Hall, 2006). Moreover, they usually said something negative about her appearance like "what's wrong with your skin?" or "why are you so fat?" They were not careful or sorry about saying those hurtful comments because those criteria, such as academic achievement and appearance, were strongly preferred and dominant to define a student, especially middle school girls in Korea. In addition, there was an age hierarchy in Korea and since those mother's friends were older than Dana, they felt more comfortable saying hurtful comments to Dana. Dana definitely hated their negative representations of her.

To struggle against these symbolic violences, Dana invented some strategies to represent herself in more positive ways in Korea. First, Dana tried to construct her identity based on the positive aspect of her past experiences. She recalled how she had excelled in terms of overall academic achievement and English in Korea before her middle school. It was helpful for her construction of positive identities to think of how excellent she had been in her elementary school.

Second, to have a positive view of herself, she thought about the specific context of her school grade. For example, she focused on the lack of additional support for her education, such as sending her to a private academy, that she received from her parents. Many of her friends in the same middle school went to a private academy to improve their test scores, but her parents did not support this. Therefore, she thought her grades were valuable outcomes of ‘her own effort’ without any help from her parents even though they were not satisfying to her mother. Therefore, when her mother scolded Dana’s low grades, Dana said to her mother, “wasn’t this good grade (even without any help from that private education)?”

Third, Dana recognized that she had multiple identities, not only a negative self, in terms of academic identity. While she was usually inactive in her classroom participation, she sometimes had the desire to participate. However, even when she felt like joining the class, Dana hesitated to express her opinion on a course topic. One of Dana’s selves as an active student was in conflict with what her friends already thought of her. Therefore, with this conflict of multiple identities, she felt awkward raising her hand when her teacher asked if anyone had any opinion on the topic. While she acknowledged that there was the multiplicity of her academic identities, not only

others' perspectives on her academic identity, she could not reveal her seemingly unusual academic identity in her classroom in Korea.

Fourth, Dana claimed another criterion to define herself, such as personal character, resisting the preferred meaning of 'academic achievement' in Korea (Hall, 2006). She acknowledged that she did not study hard at her Korean school and preferred to play. However, Dana thought she "did not do anything bad" even though her family and Korean society defined her as 'not a good student.' In terms of her character, she was still a good person. It was unique that she focused on spending time with her friends, as most youth who preferred to play instead of study were likely to be juvenile delinquents. Academic achievement was a dominant meaning to encode youths' identities in Korea, but it could 'not solely determine' Dana's identity (Hall, 2006). Dana tried to engage in decoding her identity in her own way.

Despite her own effort, there seemed to be limitations to construct positive identities in Korea. Although Dana invented various strategies to interpret her identities in different ways from the socially preferred ways, it was impossible for Dana to construct her identities in her own ways in Korea. Her life in Korea was very boring, and she thought there was nothing she had been able to change for her identities in Korea. She had been good at English and people praised her for her English skills when she was in elementary school. However, she was represented as 'bad' at studying and English in middle school. Therefore, she was not motivated to study hard in middle or high school. Moreover, Dana felt that she was being oppressed at her Korean high school. For instance, teachers checked students' nails, hairs, and skirts to see whether

students followed the school's code of conduct. Dana could not find any ways to change her negative identities in Korea.

The process of U.S. education was 'not as easy' as she expected before going to the U.S. even though she finally achieved this goal of excellence at her American high school. At her Korean high school, a regular standardized test was the most important tool to evaluate students' performances, rather than assignments. Taking exams twice a year was the basis of her school grades. It had advantages and disadvantages. Taking only two exams a year could reduce students' work, but they risked failing if they did something wrong during those rare testing opportunities. On the other hand, at her U.S. high school, Dana had to constantly finish and submit a variety of assignments to get good grades. Those assignments were a significant basis of her school grade.

Furthermore, Dana anticipated that American students would not be as diligent as Korean students. Therefore, she expected she could be more competitive at a U.S. high school with the same effort and academic abilities as she had in Korean high school. However, Dana had to spend much time completing her assignments in her U.S. school by herself. Although teachers helped Dana with her assignments when she requested it, it was Dana who had to do those assignments everyday. Her teachers cared about her studying while making her think about, write about, and read some topics to write her essays. The U.S. education she experienced was 'busier,' rather than 'easier' than Korean education.

Finally, Dana realized that the fantasy of her identities she expected to have in the U.S. before was different from what she was experiencing right then in the U.S. She dreamed that the U.S. was a place which would naturally make her become what she

wanted to be. In that fantasy, she did not need to make an effort on her own. However, the U.S. life would not automatically give her opportunities to realize the fantasy. After her experiences in the U.S., Dana felt a sense of crisis when she found that real U.S. life was the ‘last’ chance to change her identities, rather than the beginning of many opportunities. There would be no more opportunities for her to make better identities for herself unless she succeeded in the U.S. Therefore, to make different identities, she needed to make some changes by herself.

Dana’s transnational life was out of her own control. She initially had plans to construct her identities as positive through her U.S. high school experiences and then return to Korea with the identity of 유학생 [yuhakseng]. It meant that she would become an envious person in Korea and enter a Korean university. However, it turned out that her plans were unattainable. It seemed to be challenging for Dana to enter a Korean university because the curriculum she learned at her U.S. high school was not consistent with that of Korean high schools. In addition, it did not seem that Korean international students who studied in the U.S. received preferential treatment in Korea as in the past. Therefore, Dana entered an American university, instead of a Korean university. The route of her educational career and her identities were not controlled by her plan she made before her studying in the U.S.

In her U.S. university, Dana constructed her own ‘international student’ identity in the U.S. At first, she had similar representations to the representations of international students in previous studies. It was a deficit view on international students understanding them as people struggling with a lot of challenges in a foreign country, the U.S. However, Dana’s encounter with other international students in ISR

(International Student Representative) contributed to the change of her perspective on them. Among many student clubs Dana joined in her university, she considered ISR (International Student Representative) as the most meaningful to herself. The club, consisting of international students from diverse countries, gave them the opportunities to engage in various activities, such as sharing their experiences as international students with other international students through the ISR blog, consulting about international students' concerns, and sending congratulation messages to incoming international students. Most members in the group were diligent, humorous, and had a good balance between their leisure and study. In particular, they were able to successfully do things that were usually regarded as difficult to do as an international student, such as working as a writing center consultant, university student council member, research assistant, teaching assistant, and intern. Dana felt attached to the meetings because she could feel confident when thinking that she would be able to do those things as an international student. ISR helped Dana successfully overcome the negative representations of international students.

English and Identity: “Excellent,” “being naturally mastered,” and “a lot of effort needed”

For Dana, a U.S. life was decoded as “fantasy.” She talked about what she imagined about her English skills in the U.S.:

I thought that I would be good at English and studying at an American school even if I didn't try. I heard that they [curriculum in American schools] were easy to study, so, I thought that it won't be hard (for me to study there). Also, I thought, later, I would come back to enter a Korean university as a person who

speaks English well. I didn't do any research on how I could enter a Korean university. I just roughly (imagined that). (Dana, 06/05/19)

The image of the U.S. as “fantasy” was created by her indirect experiences through her older sister’s U.S. life and Korean media. When Dana saw her sister visiting Korea after finishing her first year at an American university, Dana started to think of studying in the U.S. When Dana’s sister came to Korea, she looked so great to Dana in terms of her English skills. In particular, at that time, her sister looked like someone who spoke English very well, even though Dana reflected that her sister was actually not as good at English as she thought. Seeing her sister improve her English skills in only a year, Dana thought she would be able to enhance her English skills by living in the U.S. like her sister. In addition, Dana remembered that she was excellent in English when she was very young. Although she was not able to improve her English skills during the time of her middle school, she still had a good memory of English. Furthermore, she saw a Korean pop musician (“Drunken Tiger”) in a Korean entertainment program, and his experiences made Dana think that improving English skills through U.S. life would be very easy. The pop musician was a Korean immigrant youth who moved from Korea to the U.S. when he was an elementary school student. He talked a lot about his transnational stories between Korea and the U.S. in the TV program. Among many stories of his, the successful story of improving his ‘English’ skills impressed Dana the most.

However, Dana came to find that the fantasy she dreamed of was not true. She imagined that she would become a person speaking English very well without her own effort, but she experienced challenges surrounding English in the U.S. Dana expected

that “just living in the U.S.” would make her “naturally” “master” English “someday.” Later, she came to understand that her expectation came from her “ignorance” about English and her U.S. life. To be able to speak English very well, she had to make her own effort very much. Her ignorance was not only her personal lack of understanding of the U.S. but also the ignorance constructed by Korean society, such as the discourses about the U.S. and English in Korean mass media.

Culture and Identity: “Bored,” “new life,” “unexpected,” “comfortable,” and “New Yorker”

Dana’s fantasy about the U.S. was comprehensive, meaning living a totally “new life,” including new education and a new lifestyle, not only English. The meaning of ‘newness’ was the difference between American life and her previous life in Korea. In addition, American life meant a ‘better’— not only different— life than what she had in Korea. She discussed her expectations about what U.S. life would be like in this way:

I didn’t study hard in Korea, so I get scolded by my mom and dad every day. I thought I could live a new life in America. I expected my English to get really good. My life in Korea was so boring. ... In my Korean high school, teachers checked the length of my nails and skirts every day. Also, I had to stay at school until 10 p.m. So, I thought, “Oh, I’m going to America as soon as possible. American school ends at 3pm and American students drive to school. Such a free life. I will be able to do what I can’t do here [Korea] if you go there [the U.S.]. I’ll look cool.” (Dana, 06/05/21)

This meaning of U.S. American life for Dana was based on the hierarchy of ways of life between Korea and the U.S. For example, according to Dana’s imagination, she

would be a good student at her U.S. high school. This expectation was quite different from how she was thought of at her Korean high school. Dana was ‘not’ considered as a good student in Korea in terms of academic achievement, and she was being oppressed at her Korean high school being controlled by her teachers even for her style of her nails, hair, and skirts. However, she expected that she could enjoy a free, fun, cool, and easy life in the U.S. Dana expected that American high schools would close earlier than Korean schools and she could do whatever she wanted after school ended. Furthermore, she imagined that she would drive her own car and spend time with American friends. In terms of academic achievement, she thought it would be easier to get high grades at her American school than at a Korean school. Therefore, in the U.S., Dana would more easily become a ‘better’ person than she had tried to in Korea. Finally, Dana decided to study in the U.S.

This decision of studying in the U.S. was to change the context of her identities being constructed from Korea. She made this decision after she struggled to construct her identities in positive ways, but they did not work as what she intended in Korea. Dana judged that there was nothing she could do to change her identities in Korea. It seemed that she noticed her personal identities were closely related to where she lived, especially how others saw her with specific discourses constructed within specific social, historical, and political contexts (Hall, 2003). The discourses constructed in the Korean society, especially 학벌주의 [hakbeoljui] were strongly connecting one’s identity with the hierarchical position of a university a person graduated from. Dana thought that there was no discourse oppressing and essentializing her identities in a new context, the U.S. She dreamed that she could reset her identities into whatever she

wanted in the U.S. because she expected that people in the U.S. would not have any knowledge, including an image or discourse, about her. Dana thought she had the control over her identities, life, and the outcome of context change. She expected the change of her identities and life would follow the change of environment. In addition, she had the plan to reverse where she lived whenever she wanted. Therefore, Dana had the plan to return to Korea to live with her family and enter a good Korean university after her studying at an American high school with positive identities of good grades and good English skills. It seemed that everything about her American life was under her own control. Dana's living in the U.S. was 'temporary and instrumental' for her individual meanings since it was a temporary 'experiencing' fantasy rather than permanently 'living' in the country.

Dana expected that she would experience 'freedom' and a 'fun life' in the U.S. However, Dana's real experiences at her high school in New York were quite different from her expectations. Although her school day ended earlier everyday than a Korean school's, there were many tasks to be done after school. Therefore, she had not been able to spend as much free time as she expected. Moreover, it was difficult for her to own and drive a car in New York because of the many costs of buying a good car and having a parking space in the metropolitan city.

Through her experiences in the U.S., Dana reduced the distance between herself and American culture. Linguistically, as she thought, she was transitioning from a non-English speaker into a person who felt comfortable about communicating in English. Actually, since the second year of her university life, the burden of communicating with Americans in English was reduced to an extent that she could manage. In particular,

Dana's living experiences with American students in her dormitory led to the improvement of her knowledge about American cultures. In the dormitory, there was a "common area" where all students gathered and shared like a living room and a dining hall where many students ate together. Almost every week, students had parties in the common area and there were opportunities to naturally chat with other students. These spaces and events created a situation where Dana had no choice but to chat with American students regardless of her willingness. Through these experiences, Dana learned what her American friends talked about in their conversations, what kind of social media they used, and how they grew up. Dana's old identity in Korea was different from her current identity in terms of her attitude toward Americans. Before her experiences in the U.S., she thought that only White people would live in the U.S. and they would be completely different from herself, even though her aunt was an Asian American living in the U.S. In addition, when Dana saw foreigners in Korea, she considered them totally different and distant from herself, and she would misunderstand and treat them rudely. At the beginning of her U.S. life, Dana felt uncomfortable thinking what to do when Americans were around her or talked to her, so she sometimes intentionally avoided those situations. However, through her experiences living in the U.S. for several years, she came to understand that Americans were the same kind of human being and equal to herself. Dana still felt separated from Americans, but she had much more knowledge and understanding about their cultures and felt more comfortable around them than before. Therefore, she was positioning herself between Korean and American cultures in terms of her feelings about those cultures.

In the U.S., Dana had been establishing her own ways of interpreting her identities different from stereotypical representations about international students. These ways of representing herself were contributing to her positive identities. First, geographically, Dana used her experiences of living in New York to represent herself to people in Midwest and Korea. She was a person who came from a major metropolitan city, New York, not only from Korea. Therefore, when Dana talked about her experience of taking the SAT, not the ACT for college preparation, her Midwestern friends in her dormitory assumed the SAT was a kind of “coast thing” which came from Dana’s experience in New York.

Social Relationship and Identities: “A talkative person,” “a quiet model student,” and “hanging out with White Americans”

Dana identified herself as “a talkative person” who was socially active in Korea. Instead of spending time studying in Korean middle and high schools, she had been interested in hanging out with her friends. She did not have any concern with social relationships in Korea. As a racial majority in Korea, she had few barriers to experience challenges to creating social relationships. Thus, she held certain expectations about her social identity in the U.S. in that she would be able to maintain the image of a sociable person. She saw herself as someone who would easily hang out with American friends at her U.S. high school. For instance, Dana described her identity about social relationships in Korea and the U.S.:

I was always quiet [in my U.S. high school] because I could not speak English well (at that time). In Korea, I was a little bit talkative. ... Since there are not many Koreans in the other area [Midwest], I expected that I would be able to

make relationships with American students there. I didn't join any Korean clubs during the first semester of my freshman year (in Midwest University). I decided to stop making relationships with Koreans. (Dana, 06/05/19)

In the U.S., Dana was understood by a different lens, race, through which American students saw her as “a quiet model student” opposed to who she was in Korea, “a talkative person” and “a low achiever.” As we could see in previous studies about international students, there were stereotypes on international students in the U.S. According to those stereotypes, Dana should be quiet, feel uncomfortable about communicating in English, lack Western cultures but feel comfortable in their own ethnic cultures, excellent in academic achievement, geographically and emotionally belonging to their non-U.S. home countries, and socially separated from Americans. This typical identity of an international student was underlying American students’ gaze at Dana’s U.S. high school. Dana could feel their perspective seeing herself as ‘a quiet model student’ from an Asian country. These were specific ways to encode Dana’s identities connecting her with specific concepts in the U.S.

However, Dana’s own decoding her identities was different from the external encoding international students. This identity as a quiet model student was different from both the dominant ways to define Dana in Korea and Dana’s own ways. In Korea, Dana was not recognized as a good student in terms of academic achievement. She was seen as an inactive student in her classes. Her race or ethnicity was not focused on in relation to her identities in Korea while her school grades, especially the scores of standardized tests, were emphasized. Moreover, in terms of social relationships, she

was not a quiet person. Rather, Dana was a talkative student who enjoyed hanging out with her Korean friends in Korea as well as New York.

At her U.S. high school, under the racial separation of social relationship, Dana focused on the relationships within her coethnic community. At the school, the majority of her American school was Asian students. Of approximately 70 students enrolled at the small private high school, there were about ten Korean students, 30-40 Chinese foreign students, and 20-30 American students. While Dana could usually hang out with her Korean friends at school, it was difficult to find the chance to make relationships with American students.

However, at Midwest University, Dana wanted to make a change of her identities in social relationships in the U.S. In particular, at the beginning of her campus life, she wanted to make social relationships with White Americans whom she was not be able to encounter in Korea, rather than staying within the Korean students' community. She thought that Midwest was appropriate for her to make more social relationships with White American students and then decided to enter Midwest university. Dana lived in a dormitory because she would be able to more frequently encounter American students in a dormitory than other housing types even though it was hard to find other facilities near the dormitory. However, her life in the dormitory was not only positive but also stressful for her even though it was her who wanted to have those relationships. Spending time with American students for a long time felt like "a hard work" for Dana because she had to constantly think about what to do or talk in English without her own quiet time to take a rest. Moreover, she participated in mainly student clubs led by American students. Dana tried to avoid being involved in student

clubs run by Korean international students. In addition, she strongly felt belonged in an international student club, International Student Representative (ISR), because she was able to find successful student role models and have comfortable conversations about international students' campus life, such as how to get a good grade and how to find an on-campus job. The students understood their unique situation as international students in the U.S., and made progress overcoming those obstacles. Dana was able to feel confident from their successful stories.

나은 (Naeun)

Naeun's family, her mother and younger sister, lived in Incheon, a city on the west coast of Korea. Naeun's mother worked as a teacher in a foreign language high school. Naeun's younger sister majored in Chinese at a foreign language high school and is currently studying at a university in Korea. Naeun attended elementary school through her first year of university in Korea, then she came to the United States to receive a college education. In the U.S., she attended a community college in Seattle first and then transferred to Midwest University in her third year. She majored in sociology at a university in Korea and a community college in the U.S. However, she changed her major into communication, especially human resources at Midwest University. She met a Chinese American male at Midwest University and married him after her college graduation. Naeun also began to look for a job doing academic advising in the U.S. after her college graduation.

Personal Character: Adaptable

Naeun was interested in helping other people. She said that she felt rewarded when she helped her friends at her school when she was young. In her U.S. university,

Naeun sometimes helped other students, such as other Asian international students in her classes. Moreover, she was interested in understanding and adjusting herself to what other people wanted. One of the reasons why she was seeking a career as an advisor in U.S. higher education was that she thought it fit her interest in others' needs. Therefore, she tried to find what the organization she belonged to or her colleagues there wanted.

Social Relationship and Identity: “Separated,” “caring each other,” and “favorable”

Naeun was perceived as a passive person by her male colleague, Michael [pseudonym] first. He had worked at the department for a long time and worked with some Asian colleagues and customers. Through those experiences, he came to have a stereotype about Asian workers thinking of them as passive. He thought they did not ask any help about their jobs when they started their positions at the department to a senior like him even though they needed some help to understand and learn their jobs. He belonged to a White student affinity group at the university and was majoring in law; Naeun thought that he was “a White male American to the bone.” Although Naeun did not mention any word about race, it seemed that she felt that a racial stereotype about Asians contributed to her colleague's perspective on her. In one interview, Naeun talked about Michael's perspective towards her:

Well, this white guy had a bit of an unkind attitude. ... At first, I felt that he hated me a little. He belonged to a White affinity group. So, he didn't have a positive view on Asians. ... He was very mean to me at first. ... All the other employees whom he worked with before were in that (passive) attitude, but I kept trying and asking about work to him, so he felt a little different about me at that point.

Because Asians are so passive. But I keep bothering and asking questions to him.
(Naeun, 07/24/19)

Naeun actively made an effort to change how Michael saw her. She was eager to learn her job at the department by asking Michael lots of questions and listening to him. Naeun as a student advisor working for student affairs services needed to respond to many emails which asked various questions about topics, such as course registration and tuition payment. To work better, she thought that she should learn from her colleagues, especially Michael. Naeun recognized her position as a learner in terms of the relationship between her and Michael at the department. She actively learned while he taught, and she “followed” while he “advised.” Naeun may not have been as lacking in her job as Michael thought because she already had some experiences working at a very similar department at a community college in Seattle. In fact, she might have been better than Michael in responding to diverse students’ questions and requests because she was good enough at speaking Japanese, Chinese, and English, as well as Korean. However, Naeun had to listen to her American colleague in learning her job. She needed to get used to receiving his instruction even though they were at the same level. Naeun’s potential, which could be connected to becoming a good worker, was not recognized. Her racial background was decoded to interpret her identity first.

The social relationship between Naeun and her White male colleague Michael was improved after Naeun acknowledged the inferiority of her position. Before that time, she was separated from Michael. After her active effort to acknowledge the different and unequal position and Michael’s recognition of the effort, she felt associated with him. At first, he was “mean” to Naeun, but he became “favorable” to her later. Of course, we

need to consider the situation in which Naeun was located as a novice at the beginning of her work at the department. She might not have known or been familiar with what she had to do there. Despite this, the process of acknowledging her lack at the department could have had an impact on her mindset about the relationship with the White male colleague and, also, potentially relationships with other White male Americans in the future.

The meaning of Naeun's Asianness in her relationship with the other colleague at the department was different from its meaning in her relationship with Michael. Jessie [pseudonym], Naeun's female colleague at the department, also recognized Naeun as an Asian. However, the meaning of 'being an Asian' to Jessie and Naeun was different from what Michael decoded about Naeun's identity. Jessie thought they were the same in terms of a way of social relationship. Therefore, it made them be "on the same wavelength." While Jessie and Naeun were different from each other in terms of their nationality, their race, 'Asian,' was more focused on the relationship between them at their workplace. Moreover, the meaning of being Asian was separated from how Jessie understood Naeun's attitude toward her work.

Culture and Identity: "Good adaptation," "미국병 [Migookbyeong]," and "짬뽕 [JJambong]"

Naeun was interpreted by other Korean international students in a different way from what her American colleagues understood her. She was recognized as an "American" by other Korean international students, rather than an Asian or Korean. Naeun shared this example to explain how other Korean international students identified her:

One day, in a car, I was listening to American songs while other Korean friends were listening to K-pop songs. Then they said, “You have come down with 미/국병 [Migookbyeong meaning Americanization].” ... Then I said, “What’s wrong? ... I like just [to understand] what they are saying in the lyrics.” Then they said, “You are saying in a confident way like an American now.” (Naeun, 07/24/19)

In addition, Naeun’s identity as an American was pathologized by other Korean international students. 미/국병 [Migookbyeong meaning a disease (병 [byeong]) caused by her exposure to the U.S. (미/국 [Migook]), especially U.S. cultures. In particular, Naeun’s interest in American pop songs and confidence in her attitude were focused on and decoded as the ‘symptom’ of that disease. The reason why other Korean international students considered that Naeun had a serious problem was the difference between them and Naeun. For other Korean international students, Naeun did not fit the category of a Korean. She was considered as being at the boundary between a Korean and an American. Therefore, if she did not change herself into what a Korean should be, she would be excluded from the group of Korean students in terms of cultural identity.

However, the boundary between K-pop and American pop songs was arbitrary. According to Lee (2016) and Kim and Kim (2015), Korean pop songs had hybrid characteristics between Korean culture and American culture. The production system of K-pop was close to American capitalistic system while the content of K-pop included Koreans’ experiences and emotions which were dominant in Korea. In addition, K-pop was definitely different from 국악 [Gookak, Korean traditional music] which might be claimed as essential Korean culture. Actually, it could be somewhat difficult to

distinguish the whole society and culture of Korea from U.S. society and culture because American culture permeated into the cultures and social systems of other countries, such as Korea, all over the world (Kim, 2005; Kim, 2005).

Even appearance, especially makeup style, was used to identify who Naeun was as a woman. According to Naeun, there were differences in makeup between Korea and the U.S. For instance, in the U.S., people emphasized their eyelashes and eyebrows. However, in Korea, there was more focus on the lips rather than the eye areas. In addition, the shapes of eyebrows constructed by makeup were different between Korea and the U.S. In fact, Naeun's makeup style constructed not only an objective characteristic of her appearance but also her personality and health. To Naeun's mother and other Korean women, applying lipstick less often meant not only a different lip color but also a problem of her health and personality (inactiveness). These differences were related to the hierarchy between people of different lip colors in Korea. Therefore, Naeun's mother strongly recommended her daughter to change the color and shape of some parts of her face, thus Naeun could be recognized as a 'good woman.'

The combination of Naeun's characteristics made even Koreans feel confused about her identity. When Naeun had a barbecue party with her Chinese American husband and two White American friends of her husband, she was understood as non-Korean by the other Korean woman. The complex situation which consisted of Naeun's English skills seemingly closer to an American than a Korean, her appearance (an American style of makeup), and her relationships, especially participants' race and ethnicity, could make the other Korean woman judge Naeun's ethnicity as non-Korean. The Korean woman intended to "cuss" at non-Koreans in Korean language because she

thought those she perceived as non-Korean would not understand the language and would not know what she did.

Naeun was interpreting others' view on her identity as non-Korean in a positive way. First, she thought that the fact some people in the U.S. saw her identity as non-Korean was the outcome of her 'effort' to adjust to U.S. cultures. Therefore, she was proud of being told, "You don't look like an international student" during a job interview with American employers after her graduation. Those employers said that they could not tell whether Naeun was an international student or not before they directly asked her about that. For Naeun, that statement meant that her English proficiency was close to that of Americans, or at least significantly higher than most international students. She thought she needed to select either 'listening to American pop songs' (meaning actively accepting American cultures) or 'enjoying the latest K-pop songs' (meaning staying within a comfortable zone of Korean cultures) during her studying in the U.S. Naeun chose to become acculturated in the U.S. by exposing herself to American cultures while isolating herself from Korean cultures as much as possible. That's why she narrowed down her relationships into just those with Americans while reducing her contact with the Korean language, culture, and people. Others' view on her identity as a non-Korean was to acknowledge "I [Naeun] am right," about her decision and effort to acculturate herself into U.S. cultures.

Naeun went "my way" living in the U.S. by being confident in her decision to be acculturated regardless of how other Korean international students saw her, such as with the labeling of 미국병 [mygookbyeong]. At the beginning of her life in the U.S., she had four goals: earning a four-year college degree, having diverse experiences, improving her

English skills, and having a stable status in the U.S. In the end, she achieved most of those goals. These were the reasons why she positively evaluated herself, even her changed identities at the time of the interview for this study. Naeun thought that she “fit” the U.S. life.

유리 (Yuri)

Yuri had been living in the United States for about two years when I first interviewed her. She was aiming to finish her BA in child psychology within three years, and was dreaming of working as a child psychiatrist in the future. She had never been to the U.S. before studying at her U.S. university, but she had attended an international high school in Korea to learn English, the curriculum of a U.S. high school, and American culture. In her family, there were her father, mother, and older and younger sisters; her sisters attended the same international high school. All of her family members were born and still living in Jeju, Korea, which was a famous island for tourism. Her parents, especially her father, hoped their children would experience a wider world, rather than staying in Korea.

Personal Character: Confident

Generally, Yuri was confident. She thought that she could do well in the U.S. She thought that she had more privileges than other people. For her, studying in a U.S. university was a privileged opportunity, many others people did not have a chance to experience. Moreover, she felt grateful about what she was experiencing in the U.S. Her religious background as a devout Christian could account for why she felt thankful and privileged about her life.

Career and Identity: “Jeju” and “Mr. Kuppae’s Happiness Trip”

Compared to other research participants, Yuri's academic experiences in the U.S. was well planned and prepared for. Her plan was to leave her home town in Korea and then go to the U.S. and finally, all over the world. Yuri's parents encouraged her to have a big dream of living in a global world as a global sojourner. They had Yuri and her sisters experience various foreign cultures and languages, such as English, Chinese, and Japanese before and when Yuri went to her elementary school. Moreover, Yuri's parents made her and her sisters attend the same international high school in order to be eligible for entering American universities in the future.

Yuri had positive memories of living in Jeju when she was young. She had "no concern" about anything at that time while playing in the nature of the countryside in Jeju. However, Yuri was somewhat sensitive to people's stereotypes about Jeju, especially the rural area. There is an old Korean proverb saying "send horses to Jeju and people to Seoul." This proverb reflects on the discourse of the hierarchy between Seoul, the capital city, and other areas in Korea. Seoul was recognized as the appropriate place to help people develop their careers and succeed while other areas in Korea were underdeveloped and irrelevant for people's socio-economic success. In particular, Jeju was the most geographically distant area from Seoul and also far from the image of a developed area in Korea. This gap between Seoul and other areas in Korea was not a natural phenomenon. It was related to the direction of government policies towards 'selection and concentration.' The inequalities between Seoul and other areas in Korea had been justified by claiming a lack of resources in Korea and the necessity of selection and concentration on a specific area among many areas in Korea. These historical and institutional inequalities contributed to the discriminatory discourse dividing people

living in Seoul and other areas. Therefore, Yuri did not want to be labeled as a rural girl even though she had many positive memories in her hometown. Instead, she hoped to go beyond the boundary of Jeju, even out of Korea.

Yuri's dream for her identity was to be a global sojourner. She hoped to travel all over the world while working as a child psychiatrist. Although she loved her hometown, she did not want to be stuck there. This dream was not only her dream but also her parents' dream. Yuri shared these details by recounting a book her mother gave to her in her youth:

The title of the book was "Mr. Kuppae's Happiness Trip." ... I thought I wanted to be a psychiatrist (like Mr. Kuppae) after reading the book. The psychiatrist was going on a trip to find a definition of happiness to China (and all over the world). So, I wanted to be a psychiatrist and then go on a trip to find an answer to questions that emerged from the consultation with people. (Yuri, 06/06/19)

Yuri's mother gave her a novel about a psychiatrist traveling in the world (*Mr. Kuppae's Happiness Trip*) when she was a sophomore in her Korean high school. This book provided Yuri with the main image of her ideal identity. Moreover, Yuri's parents, especially her father, provided her and her sisters with many opportunities to experience foreign languages and cultures in Korea. Her parents were born in Jeju and have been living until now hoping that their children would go to and experience the wide world out of Jeju and even out of their home country. To prepare for her future journey to the world in advance, Yuri attended a Chinese immersion kindergarten in Jeju, learned several foreign languages at a community center when she was in elementary school. Then she went to an international high school which provided the same curriculum and the same

school system as what American students learned. The educational path Yuri's two sisters took was very similar to how Yuri prepared for her future career. In sum, Yuri's identity gradually changed and expanded from a girl in the countryside of Jeju into an international student living and studying abroad.

Yuri's identity as a global sojourner needs to be understood within a broad context. It was Yuri's own decision and dream to move around the world, but at the very least, her parents made an effort to help their children prepare for their future transnational movement using available resources in Jeju. Yuri's parents had her enter a Chinese immersion kindergarten in Jeju and learn diverse foreign languages at a community center when she was very young. Despite not being in the capital city of Korea, they could find some resources to train Yuri to be a global sojourner.

Where did these resources come from? Korea started to set the vision of *세계화* [seggyehwa meaning globalization] for their national development around 1993 with the start of a new national government. The new government opened the Korean market with their agreement of the Uruguay Round in 1994. Before this change, the former government fully allowed their people to travel out of the country in 1989. In 1997, English became one of the official subject matters in Korea. These trends meant that globalization, especially oriented towards seeking Westernization or Americanization, became dominant in Korea, which contributed, at least partially, to Yuri's identities through her parents' planning and preparation for her education.

Yuri's experiences and vision of being a global sojourner were contradictory to the discourse in previous studies about Asian international students in the U.S. Previous studies on KIS looked like fetishism because they narrowly focused on KIS' traditional

Asian culture (Hall, 1997). The cultural difference was the most significant point to understanding KIS' identities in those studies. Therefore, they described KIS based on essentialized discourse, such as orientalism and the perpetual foreigner stereotype.

Previous studies on KIS adhered to traditional Asian or Korean values and drew them as beings who would eventually return to their home country. Yuri's narrative included a story opposed to the trend. She represented her identities that continued to move away from where she was born and raised. Her vision and the stage of her career gradually expanded with these changes of her identities.

Culture, Social Relationship, and Identity: Complicated feelings about Korean culture (“age hierarchy,” “jeong,” and “uncomfortable about drinking culture”), “desire to have relationships with Americans,” “hard to have American friends,” “hesitate to make relationships with Korean students,” and “sharing common topics with Asian international students,” and “translator”

Yuri's feelings about Korean cultures were complex. In existing studies on Asian or Korean international students in the U.S., they were depicted as feeling unfamiliar with or uncomfortable about American culture and instead feeling familiar with or comfortable about Asian or Korean culture (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Nilsson, Butler, Shouse, & Joshi, 2008; Rahman & Rollock, 2004; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Yang & Clum, 1994; Ye, 2005; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhang & Dixon, 2003). Of course, Yuri wanted to feel 정 [jeong meaning feeling connected] with other Korean students by making relationships with them at her university. However, at the same time, Yuri felt uncomfortable with Korean culture. She

talked about how she felt about Korean culture and why she tried to make social relationships with people other than Korean international students in the U.S.:

I was really happy to see Korean students. But, in America, I thought that I shouldn't make relationships only with them. If I keep hanging out with them, I won't be able to improve my English skills. Also, others [non-Koreans] might think that I hang out only with Koreans. In addition, I don't like the culture of those students. It's kind of a drinking culture. So, I made relationships with Asian (international) students more than Korean students here. I originally didn't intend to meet Asian international students, but I got to feel more comfortable with them. I think American students [White American students] and Asian American [students] have their relationships within their own groups. (Yuri, 08/07/19)

For instance, she disliked the drinking culture of Korean international students. She thought she had to drink alcohol to have good relationships with them, but Yuri was not good and favorable at drinking any alcohol at all. For these reasons, Yuri had not only familiarity with Korean culture but also sometimes uncomfortableness with that.

Moreover, in Yuri's past experiences about Korean cultures, there were some characteristics of her home country's cultures that made her feel uncomfortable about.

For example, the reason Yuri was teased by her friends in her elementary school was that her age was not the same, actually younger than her classmates, as their age. In Korea, there was a culture emphasizing an age hierarchy among people, even among young children. Her friends in her grade in the elementary school were unsatisfied with that Yuri, who entered the school a year earlier than everyone else in the same grade, treated them as friends. They wanted Yuri to respect them as older people, rather than as equal

even though they belonged to the same grade. Because of this problem, Yuri had some trouble with her classmates and so that she had to pretend to be the same age as her classmates by hiding her age later. In addition, Yuri felt a sense of discomfort with the school culture centered on objective test scores and individual competition in her middle school and international high schools in Korea. When the homeroom teacher in Yuri's middle school homeroom teacher asked her and the other students to check the report card in which they could see both their own and other students' test scores, she became very uncomfortable about the process. With these complicated feelings with Korean cultures, she consciously distanced herself from Korean international students and their cultures in the U.S. Through these examples, it can be seen that Asian or Korean culture, which was seen as a homogeneous culture from the perspective of an outsider, can be seen as heterogeneous cultures which contain various differences and conflicts from the perspective of an insider. It could have led to the complexity of Yuri's emotions that she felt about the culture of her home country during her life across two countries.

Yuri mostly had positive views toward American cultures and wanted to belong to those cultures. When Yuri saw people of various races and cultures on her campus, she realized that she was currently living in the American landscape that she had dreamed of. In addition, when she saw instructors and students freely and actively communicating with each other in and out of the classroom, Yuri considered that culture of interaction in U.S. college classrooms as positive. She wanted to be a member of those cultures in her U.S. university.

While studying at Midwest university, Yuri tried to establish relationships with American or other Asian international students rather than with Korean international

students. However, Yuri found the distance between her and American students through her lived experiences in the U.S. While she actively tried to establish relationships with American friends, there was an atmosphere in which American students had closed social relationships mostly with other Americans. Moreover, since Yuri thought there were differences in living environment between international students and American students, she focused on making relationships with other Asian international students instead of American students. Yuri recognized that Asian international students were sharing common topics to talk and empathize with each other more than American students. In addition, she was disappointed when she came to know that she as a foreigner could not apply for medical schools in Midwest, where she was attending a university to prepare for her next career as a psychiatrist. For Yuri, this institutional barrier was significant because it prevented her from realizing her ideal identity as global sojourner.

In particular, Yuri's feeling about other Korean international students in the United States was complicated. She had many chances to meet Korean international students, such as in her classes, church, and workplace. However, Yuri did not actively form relationships with other Korean international students unless she had to meet them, regardless of her willingness to do so. The first reason why she consciously avoided forming relationships with other Korean international students was that she worried that relationships with Korean international students would make her relationships limited to Koreans. Second, she was concerned that her English proficiency would decrease because of frequent communication in Korean instead of English. Third, as mentioned earlier, Yuri did not like the Korean international students' culture, especially their drinking. Of course, there were some advantages, including getting useful information

and help with studying and living in the U.S. and feeling comfortable with them because they shared the same racial and ethnic backgrounds with her. Yuri also took pride in her background as a Korean, therefore, at the beginning of her U.S. life, she used her Korean name, instead of the English name she used when she was in an international school. Moreover, she made an effort to share her experiences in Korea with American students on and off campus.

Yuri often positioned herself as a “connector” or “translator” between Korean and American cultures. For example, while attending an international high school in Korea, she participated in a student club which did simultaneous interpretations of chapel contents in Korean into English for their American teachers. Yuri also had the experience of personally teaching Korean to one of her American teachers at the international high school. She also spent some time visiting a Korean folk village and sharing her knowledge about Korean traditional culture with her American teachers. In addition, while living in the United States, Yuri worked as a Korean Language and Culture Consultant to help students in her university understand Korean language and culture. Moreover, she gave a presentation about overall Korean culture to elementary students in the U.S. and helped them participate in the activity of making a Korean traditional clothing, Hanbok. In these roles, Yuri had a position between two cultures and introduced her language or culture to a person belonging to another culture. When Yuri lived in Korea, she sometimes helped people understand English. However, in most cases during her life in the U.S., she came to focus on introducing a Korean language and culture to Americans through her job and public activity outside of her campus. While the Korean popular culture, so called “K-pop,” was sometimes dealt with in her job, the traditional

cultures of Korea, including *탈* [tal meaning Korean traditional mask] and *한복* [hanbok meaning Korean traditional clothing] were adopted as Korean culture more frequently than contemporary culture. What is interesting here is that the traditional Korean cultures that Yuri introduced to people in the United States, especially Americans, were not something she experienced directly or continuously as a life even though she had more knowledge about those traditions than Americans. Yuri also had to study those cultures through various indirect ways before representing them to the public in the U.S.

Yuri already had some experiences with mixed cultures in Korea. The international high school Yuri attended was a good place to experience mixed cultures and try to play a role of cultural translator. Of course, her experiences in her international high school were to try and prepare for her future U.S. life. The teachers and students spoke English. The textbooks and curriculum in the school were the same as U.S. high schools. Therefore, she learned English literature as *normal* literacy and U.S. history as *normal* history, instead of Korean literature and Korean history. Also, a class on Korean language was taught as a second language even though the school was in Korea. It was interesting to Yuri that she learned Korean as a second language in Korea. Moreover, she felt comfortable about the Korean language class because it was the only class taught by a Korean teacher in Korean. Yuri made use of an “English village” near her school in which students could sometimes do activities. It was an exotic community constructed to imitate a village in a Western country. There were some buildings, such as a restaurant, and the street and signs looked like a cityscape of a Western village.

The culture and system in Yuri’s international high school in Korea was similar to but also differed from American ways of educating and living. The school looked like a

hybrid school between the Korean and U.S. cultures and systems. So, Yuri called it “an American school in Korea.” First, people in the school consisted of American teachers and Korean students. Additionally, there were some differences between students, since some students, like Yuri, were born and grew up in Korea, and other students were born or grew up in the U.S. before studying in the school. Yuri felt that there were some differences between herself and other students, especially students who were born or lived in the U.S. for a long time before their high school life. On the other hand, the style of teaching classes was not as American as Yuri expected. She imagined that an American style of teaching would be free, discussion-centered, and student-centered. However, the classes she experienced were more limited and teacher-centered than her expectation despite being more liberal and student-centered than other Korean schools. The way of education in her school was more comfortable to her than immediately and directly experiencing American style of education.

기호 (Keeho)

In Korea, Kee-ho lived in Gyeonggi-do, and his family is still living in the area. Keeho began studying in the United States in 2013 after completing his elementary, middle, and high school education in Korea and even taking a college entrance examination. From 2013 to 2014, he studied at a university in Georgia. In the spring of 2015, he transferred to Midwest University which he attended until the spring of 2019. In the middle of his studying in Midwest University, from the fall of 2015 to the end of 2017, he served in the military in Korea. Keeho majored in sports management during his time in higher education in the U.S. After finishing his undergraduate education, he started studying at a master’s program at the same university. At the same time, he

prepared to work as a video analyst for a professional soccer team as part of his long-term dream of becoming a coach for a professional team. Keeho is active and likes to meet people. During his studies in the United States, he spent most of his time with other Korean international students, rather than American students.

Personal Character: Optimistic and sociable

Overall, Keeho described himself as an active, optimistic, outgoing person with high self-esteem according to the self-representations of his personality. First, he had an optimistic view on his career and usual life. His major, sports management, came from his interest in soccer, and he was dreaming of being a head coach in a professional soccer team, especially Manchester United, a famous soccer team of the English Premier league. Another example of his optimism comes from when, in the middle of his time studying in the U.S., he took a leave of absence for about two years of military service in Korea. Other Korean male students may have worried about those duties because they expected that it would not be easy to adapt to the military culture and then readapt to campus culture when they returned to school. Instead of worrying about those issues, Keeho focused on having an enjoyable time with his Korean international friends. In addition, Keeho was very active in his social relationships. He preferred hanging out with various people over taking a rest or doing nothing in his free time and showed initiative to set up many meetings with people, mostly Korean international students, where they played soccer, drank overnight, or traveled to various places, including 11 states within the U.S. Moreover, Keeho was independent, preparing for his studying abroad and transferring from his former university in Georgia to the Midwest University by himself.

Academic Achievement and Identity: “Athletic,” “excellent student,” “lower score than expectation,” and “U.S. degree”

In terms of his academic identity, before going to his middle school, Keeho was at a crossroads in making important choices about his identities. It was a decision between the identity of an athlete and the identity of a student. On the one hand, the personal meaning of sports, especially soccer, was his own interest. Since childhood, he had been able to be good at sports because of his excellent physical ability. Soccer was a special sport Keeho enjoyed. While Keeho was not going to be a professional soccer player, he wanted to work for a soccer-related job because he was confident about the sport. However, the meaning of being an athlete was opposed to the identity of a student studying hard in Korean society (Lee, Shim., & Cho, 2013; Lim et al, 2016). In Korean schools, it was almost impossible for athletic students to achieve academic success. While they spent most of their time training and participating in competitions, other students took disproportionately high amounts of time on school work. Without focusing their lives on academic activities, it was not possible for them to be successful in getting high test scores. In Korea, academic achievement and a university degree was essential to whatever one tried to do in the future. Moreover, if athletic students wanted to succeed in their careers as athletes, they would have to achieve extremely high places in their sports areas. Although Keeho liked and had some talent for soccer, he thought that it would be hard for him to succeed as an athletic student in the future. Therefore, he finally decided to start to concentrate on his studies in middle school.

Keeho was able to establish a positive academic identity from middle school in Korea. He thought that he “studied very hard” by himself. Keeho’s efforts paid off to

some extent, and he entered “a high school where many academically excellent students were attending.” While his achievement helped him feel confident in studying in his Korean high school, his final score of the college entrance exam did not match his academic identity. He did not expect to have a low score because he was confident in his studying and he had gotten good scores in his practice tests before the official college entrance exam. The Korean government had implemented high-stake testing for students’ college entrance which was the most significant part of their college entrance even though there were also other requirements for students’ college application. Students in Korea could take the college entrance test only once. In addition, 학벌 [hakbeol meaning a social category which was determined by a university they entered and graduated from] had a great impact on their later lives, such as jobs and social status.

Keeho needed to make an effort to improve or keep his academic identity high since his test score was lower than his expectation. At this time, he had three options for his academic career after high school. First, he might be able to prepare for the college entrance exam for 재수 [jaesu meaning another year to take the test again]. Second option was to apply for a university which matched his test score. Third, he could leave Korea to study at a foreign university. Keeho was considering majoring in sports management, but there did not seem to be many universities in Korea in which he could study specialized knowledge about that major. Therefore, in the end, Keeho decided to study sports management at an American university and then applied for a university in Georgia, the U.S. All processes to prepare for his studying in the U.S., including finding information about American universities and making the decision to study at a specific

university was processed by Keeho himself, but his parents pledged to support his decision and provided financial support for his studying.

There was another reason that Keeho applied for an American university. It was to heighten his status of academic identity. For example, Keeho's self esteem was influenced by the opportunity to study in the United States. For instance, he explained:

I used to have high self-esteem, but I think I got higher through my studying abroad [in the U.S.]. ... First of all, I have never felt timid towards anybody in terms of 학벌 [hakbeol meaning university hierarchy in Korea]. (Keeho,

05/30/19)

Although American universities were not geographically located in Korea, they were connected with 학벌 [hakbeol] in Korea. Korean students' "moving for their studying in the U.S. works within the global hierarchy of universities across Korea and the U.S." (Kim, 2015: p. 30) Mostly, Korean universities were located lower than American universities in terms of the global hierarchy of universities. Overall, for Korean students, entering American universities meant moving upward with the hierarchy and improving their academic identities. Keeho might not have intended to heighten his academic status when making an effort to find better educational institutions to study sports management, but he was at least aware of how other Koreans interpreted his studying in the U.S. as a Korean student. While Keeho had a high self-esteem even before living in the U.S., he felt that he had higher self-esteem after it.

English, Social Relationship, and Identity: “유학생” [yuhakseng] and “international student”

Keeho also thought of the improvement of other identities, not only his heightened academic identity. He had some imaginations of his life in the U.S. before his actual life there. It was embodied as 유학생 [yuhakseng meaning an international student]. 유학생 [yuhakseng] and international student are actually the same linguistically, but they have different meanings or connotations within different contexts (Hall, 1997). 유학생 [yuhakseng] was a Korean student's identity from the perspective of Koreans living in Korea. Keeho shared how he imagined what he would look like and what he actually experienced in the U.S.:

Before I came to America, I had expected I would hang out with Americans every day. And, I imagined I would speak English like a native speaker. ... [In my previous university in Georgia,] there were a few Korean students. At that time, I spent every day doing the same thing with the same Korean students. It was so bored. ... Every day, we played video games and watched Korean TV shows and movies. (Keeho, 5/30/19)

What Keeho imagined about 유학생 [yuhakseng] was a Korean person, like himself, who could speak English with proficiency similar to a native English speaker (White American) and would hang out with them. This image was common to Koreans and in Korea. While Keeho's main motivation was to study sports management, other meanings and images, such as English proficiency and socially equal status with White Americans, were involved in his living in the U.S. These meanings of 유학생 [yuhakseng] could be understood from its connotation closely based on the context the word was used within, instead of its literal denotation.

At the same time, there were other, seemingly opposed, connotative meaning of 유학생 [yuhakseng] in Korea. That labeling of 유학생 [yuhakseng] was ‘escapee.’ Although Keeho did not escape what he had to do in Korea, some Koreans interpreted that rather than pursuing their own ideals, 유학생 [yuhakseng] escaped into American universities from the reality that they could not enter prestigious universities in Korea due to their scores of the college entrance exam while being financially supported by their parents. Contrary to this idea, Keeho was excellent at studying, and his score on the official college entrance exam was a kind of ‘accident’ which partially resulted from the system of the high-stake testing in Korea. Other options, including preparing for the college entrance exam one more year or entering a university which was located low within the local hierarchy of universities in Korea, were not reasonable since Keeho’s parents with middle class background in Korea could support his studying abroad.

Keeho’s lived identities in the U.S. were quite different from his imagination. As mentioned earlier, he expected that his English skills would be remarkably improved close to the connotational meaning of 유학생 [yuhakseng]. Before his studying in the U.S., Keeho did not have many experiences using English so that English was “just [a] school subject matter to study” in Korea, but he expected that his living experiences in the U.S. would be helpful for enhancing his English skills. Furthermore, he imagined that he would be able to make many active relationships with Americans in the U.S. However, what he actually encountered was closer to the connotation of international student than 유학생 [yuhakseng]. Through his lived experiences in the U.S., he came to think that “I’m not good at English” and “I know I’m poor at English.” At first, Keeho did not have many chances to use English in Georgia, except for classes. Although he

was outgoing and active in social relationships, it was not easy to make relationships with American students in the U.S. Keeho's actual relationships in the U.S. were strong relationships with 'Korean' international students. Instead of the active relationships with Americans he expected before his real U.S. life, he "did the same things with the same Korean students" in Georgia, which strengthened their relationships. Actually, in Georgia, Keeho spent time with his Korean friends everyday while playing video games and watching Korean soap operas, entertainment programs, and movies. Therefore, he thought, "If I still stayed in Georgia, I might still not be able to speak English at all." After transferring to Midwest University, Keeho had more opportunities to use English working for his part-time jobs or internships. Despite having more opportunities in Midwest than Georgia, he still felt that "I'm not good at English." Keeho's English skills were limited, similar to his social relationships in the U.S. While he could have some chances to use English for official or public speaking in Midwest, it was still very difficult to have close and private relationships with Americans in which they would have private conversations, since they rarely made personal jokes and did not have any opportunities for personal meetings outside of work. As a result, such Americans only met briefly in the context of work, and it was difficult for Keeho to make American "friends" who would be interested in "deeply talking and sharing their thoughts" not only in Georgia but also in Midwest.

Keeho sometimes utilized the preferred meanings of the identities of 'international students' in the U.S. It seemed that he was aware of how instructors perceived international students in his classes. International students were recognized as lacking in their linguistic proficiency (English) and their knowledge about U.S. culture

(Yates & Trang, 2012). Keeho appealed to instructors to consider the limitations of his identities as an international student, especially in terms of English skills, in his classes. He said to the instructors, “I’m an international student. I mean that English is not my first language, so I’m not good at English. Can I ask you anything (about English) when I come to encounter something difficult to solve?” Who he was in the U.S., especially as an ‘international student,’ was a kind of ‘handicap’ in his studying in the U.S. At the same time, the handicap was a tool to excuse his limitations which prevented him from getting better grades in his classes. Some instructors, when considering his condition as an international student, gave Keeho “higher grades than what he did” in those classes, while other instructors did not excuse his performance in their classes. Interestingly, the way an instructor considered Keeho’s identity as an international student not only depended on his English skills but also other elements of class participation, such as attendance and performance on assignment. While the instructor should have had good intentions to excuse Keeho’s participation in their class and contribute to improving Keeho’s grade, the way the instructor decoded Keeho’s identity as an international student was comprehensive, seeing Keeho as ‘unable’ to fully attend class and finish his assignments. The instructor might also have interpreted Keeho’s absence as a behavior coming from students’ cultural difference between Korea and the U.S.

However, how Keeho was perceived in Korea after the start of his studying in the U.S. was opposed to his identity as an international student in the U.S. As explained in Keeho’s imagination about how he would be in the U.S. before the start of his studying in the U.S., he was decoded as 유학생 [yuhakseng] by most Koreans in Korea. First, as mentioned earlier, studying at an American university meant that Keeho had high status

within the university hierarchy in Korea. This helped him feel more self-esteem when he visited Korea for his duty of military service. Second, in terms of English, while he thought of himself as “not good at English,” he was perceived as excellent in English in Korea when he revisited Korea. Therefore, Keeho could work as an English teacher at a private academy for about 6 months before the beginning of his duty of military service. Before going to the U.S., Keeho was just a Korean high school student who earned a low score on the college entrance exam in Korea. Also, before his revisiting Korea, in Georgia, Keeho had few chances to interact with Americans in English while flocking with other Korean international students enjoying Korea pop culture.

His identities perceived by Koreans in Korea helped him work and make some money in relation to his experiences in the U.S. In addition, Keeho’s military service job was an interpreter between Americans and Koreans using his English skills. In particular, his job was to patrol and interpret in areas where there was the possibility of an accident. There were U.S. army soldiers in the area spending their time for entertainment at night. Moreover, he guided and interpreted for people visiting the police station during the day. These images of a person who taught English and translated Korean into English were opposed to how Keeho thought of himself in terms of English. Third, even his psychological characteristics were decoded in relation to his identity as 유학생 [yuhakseng] in Korea. For instance, when he was in the military, he sometimes heard his colleagues saying “you had American mind” about his attitude. Keeho guessed that the reason he heard the word “American mind” was that he shared all of his opinions with even people with lower levels in the military environment and did a lot of work to help people with lower levels, rather than using the hierarchy to manage those people. The

environment of the Korean military community had a very strict hierarchy of military level. Keeho originally preferred horizontal relationships with people even before his living in the U.S. However, his military colleagues tried to understand his open mind connecting it with his identity as 유학생 [yuhakseng].

Culture and Identity: “Better life style (in the U.S. than Korea)” and “differences within the U.S.”

The meaning of U.S. culture for Keeho seeking his future career between Korea and the U.S. was a ‘better lifestyle’ than Korea. Therefore, living within the U.S. meant being a person who enjoyed and was accustomed to those cultures. Overall, he was impressed by some of the American cultures he experienced directly and indirectly through his four years of U.S. life. Keeho told what made him seek U.S. life in terms of American culture:

I think the reason why I wanted to live in America was this (relaxed life). It’s too tight to live in Korea. I thought it would be better to live in the U.S. because U.S. life is more relaxed. In Korea, people work until 5 or 6 p.m. and sometimes they go to 회식 [hoesik meaning that “small group of people in the company, such as fellow associates and managers, get together for dinner and drinks after work”] at 10 or 11 p.m. Then they can stay at home only for short sleeping and go to work right away. They might be able to make time to meet their friends somehow, but it’s so hard. (Keeho, 06/12/19)

First, Keeho viewed the looseness or freedom to spend time on one’s individual purposes as part of American culture. He thought that most Americans could use their time for themselves or their own family after working until around 4 p.m. Keeho’s

experience with Korean lifestyle contrasted to this perceived American way. For instance, when Keeho worked for a while as an English instructor at a Korean private academy, he usually worked from 1pm to 10 p.m. Moreover, he heard from Korean people around him and from Korean media about the work and leisure cultures of Korean corporates which involved having a busy life, working until late at night, and having no personal time or time with family. In addition, Keeho positively viewed the American lifestyle of living one's own lives without caring about others' judgement. In Korea, not only the way one feels about one's own life but also the appearance of one's life to others were considered very important. Therefore, Koreans tended to have the idea that they had to ride expensive cars and live in luxurious houses because of others' gazes on them. Americans regarded their own satisfaction with their lives as the most important and they would "say nothing even when a person was riding in a rundown car." Third, Keeho viewed the educational culture of his American university as cooperative and community-focused rather than competitive and individual. Keeho felt that the American universities he experienced adopted an absolute grading system, and the atmosphere of the class involved helping each other rather than competing with each other. On the other hand, he thought that students in the same class tended to compete and take care of their own learning in Korea because the evaluation system of higher education focused on comparison and competition among students.

Meanwhile, Keeho also had a few negative experiences with American culture. One of the worst experiences among them was the memory of being extorted and threatened with guns by Black people when he lived in Georgia. Because of this memory, he came to have a negative perspective on Black people and security conditions in

Georgia. The second negative experience was about slow service in the U.S. In the U.S., services at a restaurant were very slow, and Keeho, as an Asian, experienced racial discrimination during the service process. While Keeho had general perspectives on overall American culture, he was also aware of cultural differences within the U.S. He directly experienced the differences in education, safety, and leisure between Georgia and Midwest and heard from others about the differences of corporate culture between the western metropolitan area and the midwestern small and medium-sized city areas.

Because of Keeho's preference for U.S. lifestyle, despite a better perception about KIS as 유학생 [yuhakseng] in Korea than the U.S., Keeho was trying to settle in the U.S. His occupational career was insecure in the U.S. so that he prepared for as many opportunities as possible to settle in the U.S. Keeho's primary goal was to settle in the United States. Therefore, after graduating from his university, he applied for OPT (Optional Practical Training) to have the time to explore employment opportunities. Currently, he is enrolling in a master's program at the same university to continue his studies while looking for where to work and how to solve a problem with visa status in order to settle in the U.S. Since he studied sports management to be a video analyst or the coach of a professional soccer team, he was looking for jobs at some private institutions in the United States that he had already worked as a video analyst for or volunteered with. Keeho was also looking for a job in other areas that had some potential for employment even though it might not be directly related to what he studies in the U.S.

Summary of the Findings

This study aimed to understand the identity constructions of KIS based on their transnational experiences between Korea and the United States. Through narrative

inquiry, this study sought to identify the complexity of their identity constructions focusing on encoding (representations by others) and decoding (KIS' self-interpretations) surrounding KIS' identities. In particular, four perspectives— psychological, sociological, cultural, and historical— were used to better understand the complexity of their identity constructions. This understanding of the complexity of KIS' identity constructions will contribute to the disruption of essentialized discourses about Asian and Korean international students that pervade much of the extant literature.

Research participants in this study experienced the power of dominant discourses 'encoding' their identities within the societies they lived. For instance, in Korea, academic achievement was underscored, representing research participants as high or low achievers. The judgement of their academic achievement mostly relied on their scores on standardized tests in their schools. The background of emphasizing students' academic achievement in defining students' identities was the dominant discourse about 학벌 [hakbeol, a specific group which was hierarchized based on the ranks of people' universities]. Which university a person enters was important for the success in their career path in Korean society. Academic achievement was critical to their entering higher ranks of universities in Korea. Therefore, their status of academic achievement occupied an important portion in their identity representations in Korea.

In terms of the degree of significance of dominant discourses in decoding their identity representations, there were variations among research participants of this study. Of course, all of the research participants were commonly influenced by the defining power of academic achievement in Korea. Academic achievement was frequently and significantly used in their identity representations constructing codes about who they

were in Korea. However, some research participants, Naeun, Yuri, and Keeho had more positive attitudes of their academic achievement than other participants. On the other hand, Yoona, Sara, and Dana were represented as unsuccessful students in their Korean schools. Therefore, they were more eager to find improved identities instead of being encoded as low achievers in Korea.

In addition, there were variations in personally ‘preferred meanings’ depending on individuals’ interests. There were a variety of ‘preferred meanings’ in individual narratives of transnational identity constructions, such as academic achievement, English, future career, and global life. All of those meanings were significant to their motivations of moving to the U.S. Their studying and living in the U.S. led to the changes of not only a single characteristic but also comprehensive characteristics. Through their lives in the U.S., they could improve their academic achievements and English skills, develop professional skills for their future career, and get used to living in a foreign country with racial and cultural diversity. However, there were differences in primary motivations in each individual KIS. Three participants, Yoona, Dana, and Sara, primarily focused on enhancing their status of academic achievement. Naeun focused on improving their English skills as their unique strength. Additionally, Keeho paid more attention to their future career than other meanings in their decision to move to the U.S. Finally, Yuri aimed to be a global sojourner through her U.S. life.

KIS also experienced the differences of dominant discourses and identity representations between Korea and the U.S. In the U.S., KIS encountered new dominant discourse, especially racial discourses, representing them as Asians. While academic achievement was the dominant meaning to define who they were in Korea, race became

new criteria encoding their identities in the U.S. In particular, the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner stereotype were the main discourses preferred in the U.S. to construct their identity representations. Those who attended high schools in the U.S., Yoona, Sara, and Dana, experienced those external perspectives from Americans earlier, stronger, more frequently, and more closely than other KIS who started their studying at American universities, such as Yuri, Naeun, and Keeho.

The viewpoints based on racial discourses comprehensively contributed to the encoding of KIS' identity representations. Racial discourses on Asians in the U.S. were critical to their social relationships. KIS imagined that they would live as sociable persons hanging out with White American students in the U.S. In the priority of their social relationships in the U.S. university, White American students were the first priority. At first, for them, successful living in the U.S. meant making social relationships with White Americans and learning the culture of White Americans, rather than encountering other racial populations in the U.S. This specific orientation in their desired social relationships in the U.S. can be interpreted in diverse perspectives. This preference of social relationships shows how they decoded 'America' or 'American.' Although there are diverse racial groups in the U.S., such as Black, Asian, and Hispanic groups, they understood American as 'White' (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Therefore, making social relationships in the U.S. was identified as having relationships with White Americans. This way of decoding the national identity of the U.S. was already established before their living in the U.S. Encoding the national identity of the U.S. as White was dominant not only in the U.S. but also in Korea. Then KIS might have a 'dominant -hegemonic position' about the encoding of the national identity of the U.S (Hall, 2006). They might

accept the specific encoding and apply it to the priority of their social relationships in the U.S.

However, the research participants needed to change their position about the dominant discourse, especially White-centered national identity of the U.S. They felt that they were encoded differently from and by their White American colleagues. Therefore, it was overwhelmingly difficult for the research participants to make social connections with White Americans in the U.S. Before, the research participants thought relationships with White American students as the norm or the first priority of their social relationships in the U.S. However, they came to recognize that it would be highly difficult to have social relationships in the U.S. unless they *negotiated* their positions on this norm. Then Korean international students sought relationships with other communities, such as Asian Americans, other people of color, Korean international students, and other international students. Additionally, they found that it was valuable to make social relationships not only with White American but also other students in the U.S. in terms of various meanings. This changed position about the national identity of the U.S. is a *negotiated position* (Hall, 2006). While the research participants still acknowledged the dominance of Whiteness in national identity of the U.S. in a macro level, they also affirmed exceptional cases for their individual relationships in their micro (individual) level. They were inevitably finding the possibility of their limited social relationships to construct their positive identities in the U.S.

There were contradictions between KIS' imagined and lived identities in the U.S. They had fantasies about their identities which they expected to actualize by moving to the U.S. For instance, Yoona and Dana expected that they would become academically

competitive, improve their English skills, and make many social relationships with American friends at their U.S. high schools. Their previous experiences of being marginalized due to others' low expectation on their academic achievement in Korean schools prompted them to find an alternative for constructing positive identities somewhere else. American high schools looked easier and seemed to guarantee them positive social relationship-related images. These images contrasted with the images of Korean schools as a space where they felt it was difficult to survive. Although they actually became excellent students at U.S. high schools, U.S. society and their U.S. schools were not exactly what they imagined before living in the U.S. They did not expect to be positioned into a separate and marginalized status, especially in terms of social relationships.

KIS' experiences of contradictions between imagined and lived identities in the U.S. made some changes in their positioning between themselves and the U.S. Mostly, the imaginations of their identities in the U.S. were positive in every area of their identities. In particular, Yoona and Sara had positive images of their academic achievement and career identities in the U.S. In fact, they could have had positive self-images of their academic achievements through their education in U.S. high schools. However, they were not motivated as much as they expected in their experiences of U.S. higher education. Moreover, they felt very limited or separated in their social relationships in the U.S. Finally, they encountered institutional barriers toward international students' employment when they graduated from their universities and attempted to find jobs in the U.S. These contradictions between their positive imagined and negative lived identities in the U.S. had Yoona and Sara more separated from the

U.S. than before. Other participants, Dana, Naeun, Yuri, and Keeho, certainly wrestled with similar issues and contradictions, but less than Yoona and Sara.

Their experiences in Korea and the U.S. led to the construction of their transnational identities across two countries. Their identities were unique and different from national identities, which meant “person’s identity or sense of belonging to one state or to one nation” (“National identity,” 2021). The research participants in this study had contradictory experiences about Korean as well as the U.S. In Korea, they had their significant people, such as friends and families. They were more familiar with Korean culture than American culture. However, some KIS felt frustrated about negative representations of their identities in Korea. Some participants also felt partially uncomfortable about Korean culture. For instance, Yoona, Sara, and Dana experienced the hierarchy based on 학벌 [hakbeol] in Korea, which led to the negative representations of their academic achievement-related identities. According to Anderson (2006), there were forces that have led people to imagine a ‘nation’ as their significant community. Diverse ways, such as newspapers, novels, and schools, contributed to the construction of their consciousness as a member of their nation. KIS might have also experienced these forces and considered Korea as their “imagined communities.” However, they also encountered negative representations of their identities, which led to the gap between their identities and their home country, Korea.

Moreover, there were ‘transnational atmospheres’ surrounding them in Korea. Yoona’s mother suggested that she thought of studying abroad before making her own decision, Sara and Dana saw how their older sisters lived in the U.S., Naeun had a mother working at a foreign language high school, and Yuri experienced various language

education in community centers in her hometown. Therefore, instead of attaching only to a single nation, Korea, they started to imagine the possibility of expanded communities across multiple countries. At first, KIS imagined the U.S. as an ideal community which accepted them as equal partners. However, they experienced separations or inequalities toward them as a foreigner and minority racial group in the U.S. The contradictory experiences in both countries, Korea and the U.S., helped KIS reflect their identities as transnational, rather than attaching themselves only to their home country.

Participants struggled against unexpected differences of preferred meanings about their identities in the U.S. like what they had struggled with in Korea. There were also powers categorizing them based on specific criteria, such as 학벌 [hakbeol] in Korea. In fact, there were various potential areas of identities which could be used for diverse identity representations, while KIS were encoded solely into academic identities. To construct their own positive identities in Korea, research participants of this study tried to de/re/co-focus on other criteria positively encoding themselves, such as English, leadership, and personal character. These were the first trial of reconstructing their identities across two countries. However, it was too lacking to replace identity representations continuously forced on them by external discourses in Korea. Their decision to move from Korea to the U.S. was another effort to construct their positive identities. By changing the environment of encoding their identities, they wanted to modify their identities. However, the new environment, the U.S., was very complicated so that it was difficult for KIS to achieve their identity goals without additional struggles in the U.S.

Despite being mostly satisfied with their academic achievement in U.S. education, KIS felt frustrated about and struggled against racial separation at their U.S. schools. For example, Yoona felt separated from her American classmates while she became a model student at her U.S. high school. She tried to join as many student clubs as possible, but she did not feel blended in those groups. This separation was not only the problem of racial difference but also the lack of shared experiences and history within the local community between KIS and their American peers. Yoona knew that her American classmates and their families shared lots of experiences for a long time within the same geographic community. This made her feel more helpless about making social relationships with her American friends.

KIS explored ‘comfortable spaces’ which helped them encounter positive experiences in the U.S. In Yoona’s case, she accidentally found an identity point in her choir class which was helpful to make social connections with her classmates. Yoona had been confident in singing since her childhood in Korea, but her identity surrounding music was not a significantly ‘preferred meaning’ to define who she was in Korea, at least not more than academic identity. It had been just buried as a trivial and individual identity. However, now at her American high school, it had a different and more socially preferred meaning to make Yoona a sociable, confident person and then to be accepted as a normal or good person within her American high school. Even her music identity based on her interest, skill, and experience about singing seemed to overcome the problem of social separation in the U.S. The accidental emergence of this identity encouraged Yoona to more actively construct her identities centering on the music identity so that she continuously sutured her music identity with her other identities after her U.S. high

school, such as her decision of academic major and her social relationships at the Korean student music club in her university. Similarly, Sara utilized her leadership identity at her American high school and university to express who she was which made her American or Korean international students see her as a confident and sociable person. Yuri focused on her cultural connector or translator identity at her U.S. university life so that she could make various social relationships with other international students. These confident and comfortable spaces of their identities were useful to construct positive identity representations in the U.S.

In sum, KIS' narratives showed how they understood encoding about themselves and decoded those representations in Korea and the U.S. While there were the differences of dominant discourses about KIS between Korea and the U.S., all of those discourses produced preferred meanings which were critical to define their identities. Most KIS faced the challenges of essentially limiting their identities to racial identities as Asians, which they were still unfamiliar with. They sometimes interpreted identity representations about KIS in their own ways and then explored their own comfortable spaces to create positive identity representations in the United States.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to understand the complexity of Korean international students' identity constructions, in contrast to previous literature that tend to simplify international students' experiences. In previous research, the logic of essentialism can justify the challenges KIS experienced in the U.S. as self-harming and resulting from their exotic cultures. Through those representations, earlier studies indirectly maintained that KIS' difficulties came from the differences between Korean culture and American culture. According to the logic of essentialism, U.S. society did not have anything foundational to solve the problems KIS suffered from. U.S. society can provide KIS with only additional support, such as showing a favorable attitude towards them and increasing some resources they can access, rather than reflecting on how U.S. society sees international students, particularly vis a vis identity representation. This study examined the complexity of KIS' identity constructions to reveal a more foundational problem.

In this study, 'the complexity of identities' refers to the variations, multiplicity, and changes of KIS' identity constructions. This study adopted multiple perspectives to understand the rich characteristics of KIS' identity constructions (Lin, 2008). KIS interacted with their larger society in terms of their identity constructions. Of course, like other people, they had their own psychological processes to interpret who they were by themselves. However, they were also situated within specific contexts affecting their thoughts about their identities. Others' perspectives on KIS influenced how KIS see themselves. Moreover, not only each individual other but also the whole society had

specific criteria on how an individual is defined. Furthermore, personal and collective history surrounding a person contributed to how the person was interpreted within a society. This study made an effort to use diverse perspectives to shed different lights on KIS' identities, including psychological, sociological, cultural, and historical perspectives.

This study applied those perspectives and found specific practices relevant to the frameworks in the contexts of KIS. First, in terms of psychological perspectives, this study found gaps in identity representations between KIS themselves and academic discourses. KIS understood their identities as diverse, such as independent, leadership, careful, adaptable, confident, and optimistic, in terms of personal characters. Most research participants decided to move to the U.S. by themselves without relying on others' judgement even though they had to get support from their parents. In addition, during their time living in the U.S., they often had to learn how to survive by themselves given that their support groups, such as families and friends, were not able to help KIS because of the geographic distance between Korea and the U.S. However, the essentialized representations of KIS in previous studies were quite distinct from KIS' self-representations (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). Asian international students were described as passive and being used to collectivistic culture which was called 'Asian culture.' Those studies explained that this characteristic of collectivistic culture made Asian and Korean international students dependent on their group, rather than making decisions by themselves. Those studies drew on Confucianism to represent these stereotypes about Asians. In those studies,

Confucianism was understood as a type of culture producing different characteristics of people, such as a passive, collectivistic, and exotic human type while there were debates surrounding whether Confucianism was able to be identified with those characteristics. There were variations of Confucianism among Asian countries, and there had been changes of Confucianism with long history of Asian countries (Choi, 2018; Cho, Choi, & Shin, 2003). In fact, Confucianism was used to ‘encode’ the identities of Asians in Western societies (Hall, 2006). Interestingly, Confucianism is able to be connected with two contradictory inferences. For example, some people used Confucianism to explain why Asian countries were economically underdeveloped while others utilized the same culture to justify their economic growth, such as Asian Tiger countries (Choi, 2018). Confucianism was not enough to explain the collective characteristics of Asians even though we can acknowledge Confucianism as one of important backgrounds of those characteristics. Thus, the encoding or connection between Confucianism and KIS’ identities were arbitrary. The findings of this study contributed to disrupting the essentialism of KIS’ personal characters by revealing KIS’ self-representations, which were diverse and different from previous studies.

Second, from a sociological perspective, this study revealed the relationship between KIS’ identity representations and dominant discourses in a society. The perspectives from others directly influenced on KIS’ identity constructions. For instance, Yoona, Sara, and Dana were very concerned about others’ views, such as their homeroom teachers and parents, centered on their academic achievement in Korea. Through their interactions with others in Korea, they perceived the importance of standardized test scores as ‘preferred meaning’ to define their identities in Korea while promoting them to

desire for being academically excellent students somewhere else (Hall, 2006). Dominant discourses of 학벌주의 [hakbeoljui meaning critical preference to the university hierarchy] in Korean society were critical, albeit indirectly, in forming their identity representations (Hall, 2003). In fact, dominant discourses in from Korean society were embedded and mediated in the discursive practices in their social interactions with others. Each of my research participants in this study perceived ‘academic achievement,’ especially standardized test scores, as a powerful factor defining their identities in Korea. However, there were differences in degree of perception on the importance of academic achievement. These findings showed the impact of social interactions they had through their lives and dominant discourses on their identity representations and constructions.

With these various forces and identity representations surrounding KIS, they explored ‘comfortable spaces’, places that better allowed them to negotiate diverse identity representations about them. Previous studies represented KIS’ identities as exotic others struggling with strange and foreign culture (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). They assumed that KIS’ cultural identities would not change so that KIS inevitably continued to face challenges in the U.S. and finally returned to their home country. Those studies also suggested that assimilating their styles and cultures to U.S. culture was the only way to survive in the U.S. Those studies did not acknowledge any space for the negotiation of their identities.

This dissertation study showed how KIS found their own spaces in the U.S. while constructing their complex identities. In particular, this study focused on the complexity of identity construction as layering and suturing of multiple identity representations

across two countries and diverse life areas. For instance, music groups, such as Yoona's U.S. high school choir class and Korean student music club at her university were significant spaces for her to make social relationships with not only Korean international students but also American students in the U.S. Her identity related to music mostly had a narrow and individual meaning in Korea, but it became more expansive including various meanings, such as meanings to her individual, social, and academic identities in the U.S. than Korea. Without assimilating herself into totally different cultures and hiding her own cultural identity, she was able to find the common ground to interact with people in those spaces. Other KIS in this study also showed the diversity of their comfortable spaces in the U.S. Korean student association for Sara, International Student Representative for Dana, student adviser position for Naeun, Korean language-culture consultant for Yuri, and many social groups with other KIS for Keeho were the spaces where they felt respected and confident. Within these spaces, they were able to maintain who they were and learn different cultures in direct or indirect ways.

Third, in terms of cultural perspectives, this study found the different ways of defining the same KIS between Korea and the U.S. Of course, previous studies also used cultural perspectives to understand KIS' experiences in the U.S (Chun & Poole, 2009; Heo & Lee, 2007; Kim, 2007; Lee, 2012; Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Sa, Seo, Nelson, & Lohrmann, 2013; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). They solely focused on KIS' traditional Asian culture, especially Confucianism, to define their identities. This led them to the conclusion that KIS were already different from American students and there would be no change of their identities. However, this study used the comparative framework of transnationalism (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Vertovec,

2001). KIS had transnational experiences across two countries, Korea and the U.S. For example, Sara spent a lot of time living in the U.S., including 3 years in elementary school, 3 years in high school, and 4 years in university, in addition to her time in Korea. Through these transnational experiences, KIS confronted dominant discourses encoding their identities not only in Korea but also in the U.S (Hall, 2006). They experienced both Korean and American cultures in their daily lives, and those cultures were different from each other. Culture can be understood as kind of code. Culture is a process and byproduct of making a code defining, categorizing, and hierarchizing objects, concepts, and phenomena in the world (Hall, 1997). The ways of socially defining the same research participants were different between Korea and the U.S. KIS navigated multiple ways of encoding their identities between Korea and the U.S. This finding about the different ways of representing KIS' identities was distinct from the homogeneous perspective in previous studies.

Fourth, this study revealed how KIS' personal histories and international history interacted with their identity constructions. Previous research assumed that KIS and other Asian international students held static and homogeneous identities (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Nilsson, Butler, Shouse, & Joshi, 2008; Rahman & Rollock, 2004; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002; Wilton & Constantine, 2003; Yang & Clum, 1994; Ye, 2005; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhang & Dixon, 2003). They did not sufficiently acknowledge the influence of KIS' personal histories on their identity constructions. The only historical element which previous studies considered to understand KIS' identities was their history of Confucianism. This characteristic in previous studies about KIS' identity representations could be understood as 'historical fetishism' (Hall, 1997). This

study addressed as many layers of history as possible to find the complexity of KIS' identity constructions. In particular, KIS had their own personal histories across two countries, not only the old and collective Asian tradition, such as Confucianism. Diverse experiences in their lives contributed to various identities which KIS had to struggle with. For instance, their experiences in terms of schooling and social relationships in Korea led to their academic and social relationship-related identities. In addition, they came to encounter and had to struggle with racial identities which produced different expectations on their academic and social relationship-related identities in the U.S.

Moreover, this study attempted to use postcolonial history, especially the history based on unequal relationships between Korea and the U.S., to understand the meaning of international history on KIS' individual identity constructions. For instance, when KIS planned to study in the U.S., most research participants had their own identity fantasies of what they would look like in the U.S. In Korea, American cultures had been perceived as superior to other cultures, even to their own Korean culture, through the unequal history of the relationship between Korea and the U.S. Their imaginations of U.S. culture mostly looked like living in a better culture as a superior person. They thought that they would achieve 'better identities' by learning U.S. cultures, such as learning English, getting U.S. university degrees, and having various experiences in U.S. cultures. The reason why they considered those imagined identities as 'better' or 'superior' was that those images of a person were 'preferred' to define a superior person in Korea. Where did the preference come from? That preference which was commonly found in KIS' identity representations subtly corresponded to the inequalities (which culture, language, and academic degree is valued than others) in history of the relationship between Korea and the U.S.

In summary, this study contributes to the advancement of our understanding of KIS' identity constructions and disrupts the essentialism that pervades previous studies on Asian and Korean international students in the U.S. Stuart Hall's notions of identity as process and the concepts of encoding/decoding were helpful in highlighting the complexities of KIS identities and appropriately framing this study for that purpose. Diverse perspectives, including psychological, sociological, cultural, and historical perspectives, enriched the outcome of this study and have led to a deeper understanding KIS and other Asian international students in the U.S.

Implications

This exclusivity of U.S. higher education toward KIS was contradictory to their assumption about KIS' identities. KIS were represented as 'exotic others' which had quite different identities from American domestic students. However, their otherized identity representations were not considered in educational aspects. It is difficult to understand this contradiction between actual educational treatment and identity representations for KIS as exotic others. Is this mismatch an unintentional mistake in the curriculum? Otherwise, was this problem an educational inequity coming from the unequal relationship between KIS and American domestic students or universities? This is a serious problem because, unfortunately, it is happening not only to KIS but also to other Asian international students studying in the U.S.

Although U.S. universities have made their own efforts to improve education for KIS in the U.S., these attempts have been limited. One main problem is assuming that KIS are to learn in the same way that U.S. students are taught in their classrooms. The teaching styles in U.S. universities are much more student-centered than the teaching

commonly found in Korea. These pedagogies and traditions found in U.S. classrooms are often things not experienced by KIS before arriving in the United States.

What do we need to do for the improvement of KIS' education in the U.S.? Of course, it will be somewhat helpful to apply culturally relevant pedagogy to education for KIS focusing on reflecting their ethnic culture on the curriculum and instruction for KIS in U.S. education. However, the basic assumption about KIS' identities in the argument of culturally relevant pedagogy might need to be carefully reconsidered. Homogeneous confirmation between KIS' cultural backgrounds and the pedagogy for KIS in the name of culturally relevant pedagogy is problematic because this type of pedagogy will force KIS to learn the same contents in the same way, which some KIS do not want and fit. This study showed that KIS constructed their own identities struggling with various identity representations within transnational contexts. There was the possibility that the identity representations of the same KIS would be various depending on who encoded the person and within what context the person was encoded. Therefore, it is not reasonable to claim that KIS are inherently and perpetually different from U.S. domestic students and that they need to be taught in a different way from U.S. students, but the same way as other KIS.

There are some alternative ways for KIS' education in the U.S. Beyond attaching to the dichotomy between teaching American or Korean culture, the education for KIS needs to be 'layered' or 'sutured' following the nature of KIS' identity constructions. To achieve this education for KIS, it is necessary for educators to commit themselves to praxis, both reflection and actions about education for KIS (Freire, 2005). First, educators teaching KIS need to reflect on their assumptions about KIS' identities. Trying to avoid

the essentialist views on KIS, they need to attempt to see the complexity of KIS' identities, especially layeredness of their identity constructions. In KIS' identities, there are multiple layers, not only Asian traditional values but also their own interest and the history of international relationship between Korea and the U.S. Understanding the complexity of KIS' identity constructions, educators are able to begin to use an alternative solution for KIS' education in the U.S. Second, educators need to allow KIS to have 'comfortable spaces' in their curriculum and instruction. In particular, educators' assumptions about who can solve or improve the problem about KIS' education need to be reflected on. The assumption that KIS cannot do anything to improve their education and need to wait for others' treatments is similar to the deficit view on their identity representations in previous studies. In fact, KIS have constructed their own trajectories of education by crossing the boundary between Korea and the U.S. even though it is not sure to judge whether those attempts were successful or not. KIS have found and are still finding their own spaces in and out of their classrooms, such as music, cultural translation, and leadership. KIS found themselves worthy, confident, and respected in those comfortable spaces. To help KIS make or find their comfortable spaces, educators sometimes need to let KIS decide which topic they want to write for their course paper or which book they want to choose to discuss a specific topic while supporting them on how they can implement the process of writing a paper or discussing a topic. They might want to write about Asian tradition, American pop songs, or their disagreement with hierarchical culture in Korea based on their own preferences and identities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to understand the complexity of KIS' identity constructions. This goal is to disrupt essentializing discourses about KIS in previous studies and enrich our understanding the identities of non-traditional students, KIS in the U.S. The main research question to guide this study was 'How did KIS construct their identities with their transnational experiences between Korea and the U.S.?' In particular, using Hall's concepts about representations, encoding/decoding, this study specified research questions into 'How were KIS 'encoded' by representations in discourses about them between Korea and the U.S.?' and 'How did KIS 'decode' various representations in discourses to construct their identities across two countries?'

In terms of encoding which KIS experienced, research participants in this study experienced the power of dominant discourses 'encoding' their identities within the societies they lived. In addition, KIS experienced the differences of dominant discourses and identity representations between Korea and the U.S. In Korea, 학벌주의 [hakbeoljui, critical preference to the university hierarchy] and globalization had significant impact on the representations of their identities. In the U.S., the viewpoints based on racial discourses contributed to the encoding of KIS' identity representations, such as inherently passive, quiet, serious, and academically excellent persons.

In terms of the KIS' decoding of their identities, there were differences in personally 'preferred meanings' based on individuals' interests and contexts. There were diverse 'preferred meanings' in individual narratives of transnational identity constructions, such as academic achievement, English, future career, and global life. Additionally, the degree of significance of dominant discourses in decoding their identity

representations was various among research participants of this study. Moreover, KIS' experiences of contradictions between imagined and lived identities in the U.S. led to the construction of their transnational identities across two countries. Originally, they had fantasies about their identities which they expected to actualize by moving to the U.S., but there was gap of identities between imagined and lived identities in the U.S. This contributed to their detachments to both their home country and country of studying abroad.

In this encoding/decoding of their identities, they struggled against familiar and unfamiliar representations surrounding their identities both in Korea and the U.S. KIS felt unsatisfied with the representations of their identities in Korea. They moved to the U.S. imagining their positive identities which were requested based on 학벌주의 [hakbeoljui] and globalization in Korea. However, they had to continue to struggle with another dominant discourses in the U.S., such as racial separation. After encountering those challenges, KIS explored 'comfortable spaces' which helped them construct positive experiences in the U.S. based on their own interests and contexts.

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APPENDIX

Interview Protocol

First, I would like to learn about your background.

1. Please tell me about yourself, including your name, nationality, visa status in the United States, and the major/program that you are enrolled in at the university.
2. Have you come to the United States only for school, or have you visited before? Have you been in any other country? If then, where was (or were) the country (or countries)?

I would like to listen to how you grew up in Korea or any other country.

3. Would you tell me about where you grew up and how the environment was?
4. If you have your family, please share with me your family. How did your parent (s) raise you? Would you tell me about specific memories and relationships with them?
5. Could you tell me about your friends? Who were your friends? How did you spend time with those friends?

I would like to ask you about your experiences in your schools in Korea.

6. In general, how were your experiences in your schools? Did you do well in your schools?
7. What do you think about your learning experiences in your classrooms? How did your teachers teach you? Please share your memories about your schooling with me.
8. What was your favorite thing in your school days? How do you think it make you like that?

I would like to learn about your experiences in the United States.

9. What are your daily routines in the United States? Where do you spend most of your time? Whom do you meet in most of your time?
10. Would you share with me impressive happenings you experienced in the United States?
11. Overall, do you feel satisfied with your experiences in the United States? Please tell me more about what you experienced.

I would like to listen to your goals and dreams.

12. Do you have your own life goal? If then, what is that? Also, would you share with me the background story about your life goal?
13. Could you tell me about your future plan after your graduation?
14. Do you have a role model? Who is that? And, why do you have him/her as your role model?

CONSENT FORM (Identity Study)

Title of Study: Understanding the identities of Korean International College Students in the U.S.

You are invited to be in a research study to understand the identities of Korean international college students in the U.S. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a Korean international student with full-time student status and have studied at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities for at least 1 year or graduated from the university within 1 year. The researcher asks that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Jungyeol Park, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and Vichet Chhuon as his academic advisor is guiding Jungyeol. They will collaborate with each other and share through whole process of this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand the identities of Korean international college students. Korean international college students in the U.S. experience the diversity of culture through their living between Korea and the U.S. Those experiences are likely to influence students' identities in various manners.

However, some studies about Asian international students in US universities described the students' identities in a simple way. Asian international students have been illustrated as having old, fixed identities that are different from US domestic students in those studies. In particular, Korean international students' attitude toward classroom participation has been represented as inherently passive and obedient. Researchers in the studies about international students in the U.S. usually connect their identities with Confucianism.

This study aims to deeply and comprehensively understand how Korean international college students negotiate their identities through their experiences between Korea and the U.S. The researcher will ask questions about students' backgrounds, their life experiences in Korea the U.S., their learning from transnational experiences between Korea and the U.S. To have answers for these questions, the researcher will interview and conduct shadowing. Specific information about the procedures of the methods will be explained in the section of "procedure."

This study will show the complexity of identities of Korean international college students in the U.S. In a theoretical manner, the findings of this study will provide empirical examples of the complicated identities based on Asian international students' lived experiences. Moreover, this study aims to expand our understanding beyond simplified identities in earlier studies. Furthermore, the research results will help university administrative staff and instructors have deeper understanding about Korean international students and improve university policies, classroom instruction, and academic advising.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, the researcher would ask you to share your daily life and history with the researcher through an individual interview and shadowing. In an individual interview, you will be asked to talk about your personal histories in Korea and your everyday life in the United States. For instance, the researcher will ask questions, such as "Could you share with me about your childhood in Korea?" "Would you like to talk about your family?" and "What do you usually do in your free time in the U.S.?" Individual interviews will be conducted one time for about 1 hour, but, if the researcher needs and you agree to do more interviews, the interviews can be expanded longer than for 1 hour or add one or two more follow-up interviews. The interviews will be recorded by a voice recorder for transcribing it later. Shadowing will be conducted for three days depending on your schedule to understand diverse aspects of your everyday life. In shadowing, the researcher will follow you and visit some places about your daily life in the U.S., such as your home, study space, restaurant, and café for three days. This research activity is to understand your life and identity and contexts within diverse places. Without your agreement of the place and time, shadowing will not occur and the schedule and place are able to be adjusted depending on your availability. The researcher might request to take photos of places in your everyday life, such as the photos of your belongings, room, and your favorite places. You will have time to see the pictures and should feel free to request to remove the photos you don't want to share with the researcher.

The researcher will provide you with three chances of precautions. First, through the consent form of this study, you will be informed that you have the right to decide what would be told or not about your personal history, life, and classroom experiences before your participation in the study. Second, this same informing process will be at the beginning of each research methods, including an individual interview and shadowing. Moreover, after transcribing the raw data of this study, the transcripts of your interview will be reviewed by you, then you can tell the researcher whether there is anything to make any risk to you or not.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has several risks. First, the interview might include your personal or sensitive information. This study is about international students' experiences in the U.S. These experiences might include discrimination that you encountered in the country. For example, you might feel isolated from your classroom peers in your classes or experience ignorant attitude from university staff. These discriminative experiences could be very negative to you, so you would not like to talk about those experiences. Second, the interview might lead to stigma to you. You might think the label of an international student as a stigma because it could remind the students a minority group that is separated from and unable to integrate into mainstream in the United States. Third, your privacy might be invaded through the interview. The experiences might be related to your privacy, including your own story in the United States.

However, there is no direct benefit to your participation in this study.

Compensation:

You will receive payment as compensation for your participation in individual interview or each day of shadowing. The compensation is a Target gift card with ten dollar value. It will be provided right after interview or shadowing. If follow-up interview or shadowing is needed, additional stipend will also be given to the participant after the research activity. The same amount of compensation will be provided to the participant who withdraws in the middle of the interview or shadowing. However, if the interview or shadowing is cancelled in advance, the compensation will not be provided to the person.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only my research team and I will have access to the records. Study data will be encrypted according to current University policy for protection of confidentiality. All recordings and transcripts from this study will be destroyed after analysis is completed. If the data need to be kept longer than original plan of data keeping, researchers will explain the reason why the data need to be used longer and confirm whether you agree to maintain the data longer or not.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide

to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Jungyeol Park (principal investigator) and Vichet Chhuon as his academic advisor will guide Jungyeol and collaborate and share with him the process of this study. You may ask any question you have now. If you have any question later, **you are encouraged** to contact principal investigator at 612-644-3406 or park1271@umn.edu. Otherwise, you can contact his academic advisor at 818-486-2366 or vichet@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Participants' Advocate Line, *HRPP, 350-2 McNamara, 200 Oak St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414*; 612-625-1650 (toll free: 1-888-224-8636).

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

CONSENT FORM (Writing Study)

Research Title:

Korean International Students' Experiences about Writing Courses in a U.S. university

You are invited to be in a research study of Korean international students' experiences about writing instruction in a US university. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a Korean international student who took at least one writing course at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in Spring 2018, Fall 2018, or Spring 2019. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Vichet Chhuon, Department of Curriculum and Instruction (Associate Professor) at the University of Minnesota.

Background information:

The purpose of this study is to understand what challenges Korean international students in the U.S. have, what makes these difficulties, and how they cope with them. Like other Asian international students in the U.S., Korean international students face lots of challenges in their studying in the U.S. Linguistic, cultural differences they feel in US universities lead to various difficulties, which are hard to be overcome within a short period of time. In particular, writing in English is a significant skill for Korean international students to submit their results of learning and to be assessed in their courses. Therefore, they take writing courses in their universities to solve the academic problem of studying in English in US universities.

Writing courses address not only linguistic skills but also US-specific culture and world views in their course content, resources, and teaching methods. This cultural uniqueness of writing courses in US universities is sometimes good for Korean international students to experience new culture. However, the cultural aspect of writing courses contributes to academic challenges to Korean international students when the cultural differences between the U.S. and Korea are not appropriately addressed by the instructors of the courses. Given the importance of cultural characteristics of writing courses, previous studies about writing instruction for Korean international students in the U.S. focused on specific techniques of writing or writing instruction, rather than cultural experiences of Korean international students in their writing courses.

This study aims to identify cultural aspect of Korean international students' experiences in their writing courses in the U.S., rather than technical aspect of writing instruction. In fact, the research questions of this study are what problems Korean international students have, what results in those challenges, and how those students negotiate their problems in their US writing courses.

To understand students' experiences in their writing courses, the researcher needs to have the knowledge of their lives out of writing courses. The background knowledge will include how Korean international students have lived before their studying in the U.S., what world views they have, what they have experienced in the U.S. Therefore, there will be two series of individual interviews: 1) the first interview will focus on students' experiences in their US writing courses; 2) the second interview will broadly address students' life experiences in Korea and the U.S. Specific information about the procedures of the methods will be explained in the next section of "procedure."

It is expected that Korean international students can express their opinions and perspectives based on the experiences in their writing courses through this study. Moreover, individual interviews can help Korean international students reflect on their

lives in the U.S. comparing with their lives in Korea. Furthermore, the research results will help university staff, including administrative staff members and instructors have deeper understanding about foreign students, such as Korean international students. This understanding will improve university policies, classroom instruction, and staff's attitude toward foreign students in their institution.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

The researcher will ask you to share your experiences about writing instruction in your university, your personal history in Korea, and experiences of living in the U.S. There will be individual interviews twice between you and the researcher. The first interview will focus on your experiences about writing instruction in your university, and the second interview will address your life experiences in Korea and the U.S. Each interview will be conducted in public space, such as cafe for about 1.5 hours and recorded with voice-recorder for later transcribing. If the researcher needs and you agree to participate in more interviews, the interviews can be expanded longer or added once or twice more than the original plan. The researcher will provide you with three chances of precautions. First, through the information sheet of this study, you will be informed that you have the right to decide what would be told or not about your personal history, life, and classroom experiences before your participation in the study. Second, this same informing process will be at the beginning of an individual interview. Moreover, after transcribing the raw data of this study, the transcripts of your interview will be reviewed by you, then you can tell the researcher whether there is anything to make any risk to you or not.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has several risks. First, the interview might include your personal or sensitive information. This study is about international students' experiences on and off their US campus. These experiences might include negative as well as positive memories that you

encountered in your classes or off campus. For example, you might feel isolated from your classroom peers in your classes or experience ignorant attitude from university staff. You might want to avoid telling these negative experiences. Second, the interview might lead to stigma to you. You might think the label of an international student as a stigma because it could remind the students a minority group that is separated from and unable to integrate into mainstream in the United States. Third, your privacy might be invaded through the interview. The experiences might be related to your privacy, including your own story in the United States. However, there is no direct benefit to your participation in this study.

Compensation:

You will receive payment as compensation for your participation in each individual interview. The compensation is a \$10 Target gift card. It will be provided right after an interview. If follow-up interview is needed, additional stipend will be given to the participant after the research activity. The same amount of compensation will be provided to the participant who withdraws in the middle of the interview. However, if the interview is cancelled in advance, the compensation will not be provided to the person.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Study data will be encrypted according to current University policy for protection of confidentiality. All recordings and transcripts from this study will be destroyed after analysis is completed. If the data need to be kept longer than original plan of data keeping, researchers will explain the reason why the data need to be used longer and confirm whether you agree to maintain the data longer or not.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect

your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota [or, if with other cooperating

institutions, insert names here]. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Jungyeol Park under Vichet Chhuon's advising. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Jungyeol Park (612-644-3406 and park1271@umn.edu) or Vichet Chhuon (818-486-2366 and vichet@umn.edu). This research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants' Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 or go to

<https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns>. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Recruitment Material

Title: Hi, I'm looking for research participants for my study about Korean international college students in the U.S.

Hi all,

How is it going your semester?

My name is Jungyeol Park, and I'm studying at the doctoral program in the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. I have a plan to conduct a dissertation study about the experiences and identity construction of Korean international college students in the U.S. I'm looking for research participants for my study to listen to the experiences of Korean international students studying in the University of Minnesota. Any Korean international student who has studied for more than a year or graduated from their schools within a year can participate in this project. If you are interested in or know any person who is likely to be interested in this study, please contact me through my email (park1271@umn.edu), Facebook messenger, call (612-644-3406), text, or in-person.

I will explain the process of this study to help your understanding. This study consists of an individual interview and shadowing. First, an individual interview is a conversation between research participant and the researcher for about an hour and a half. A research participant will talk about what they experience and feel while living between Korea and the U.S.

Second, shadowing is literally that the researcher follows a research participant for a period of time to experience and understand research participant's daily life. The researcher conducts shadowing because it is necessary to understand research participant's culture and context, which is not available to figure out through an individual interview. Shadowing will happen in places for research participant's daily life, such as eating, studying, and meeting other people. Of course, the place and time for shadowing will be determined by research participant's permission. Moreover, the information about research participant's privacy will not be included into the final research outcome.

There are payments for participation in this study. A research participant will be paid for their interview (a Target gift card with \$10 value per an interview) and shadowing (a Target gift card with \$10 per shadowing). Basically, each participant will have an interview and three times of shadowing depending on their availability and willingness about research participation. Furthermore, the place, time, and method of an interview and shadowing will be determined by agreement between the research participant and the researcher.

I appreciate your interest in this study about Korean international college students in the U.S. Please feel free to ask me any question about the study, and I will do my best to answer your question. You can find specific information about this study in the attachment of “Research Information.” Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Jungyeol