

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: The Formation and Everyday Negotiation of Ethnic Identity among Korean-American High School Students in The United States

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This study examines the variables and contexts involving the negotiation and formation of ethnic identity among Korean-American high school students in a county in the Mid-Atlantic United States. The study was performed under the three assumptions: 1) Korean-American high school students' ethnic identity is not fixed but fluid, so it is prone to change in the process of its formation, 2) Korean-American high school students' ethnic identity is negotiated and formed gradually through their daily interactions with their family members, peers, and Korean adults, and 3) The Korean family, Korean immigrant church, and informal meeting places are major venues in which Korean-American ethnic identity is negotiated and formed.

The study was conducted by employing both quantitative and qualitative methods. A survey was employed to gauge the gamut of the participants' daily routine in diverse contexts. The participants included 109 Korean-American high school students who attended ten public high schools in the county. The qualitative methods included in-depth interview and participant observation. The interview was employed to grasp the deeper meanings of the participants' language use, behavior, and values in diverse contexts from their perspective. The participants of the in-depth interview were 18 Korean-American high school students, 12 Korean parents, and four church adults. Participant observation was employed to capture the students' various interactions with

their peers and Korean adults in everyday contexts. The sites for participant observation included a Korean immigrant church, a Korean pool hall, a Korean Internet café, a Korean teahouse, and a Korean Karaoke shop in the local Korean community.

The findings supported the study's three assumptions. Both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that Korean-American high school students negotiated and formed their dynamic and fluid ethnic identities through their interactions with their family members, peers, and church adults in the home, school, church, and informal meeting places. Also, the students' diverse ethnic identities were displayed through their clothing, language use, and behavior patterns. There were three different groups of Korean American students according to their age of entry to the United States: the 0-5 group, the 6-12 group, and after-12 group. Ethnic identity and behavior varied by group.