

Ethnic Identity of Women of Korean Descent and Its Influencing Factors

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This study is an attempt to investigate women of Korean descent's ethnic pride as a component of ethnic identity. We explore women of Korean descent's ethnic identity in general as well as the difference by country and investigate the factors that influence the ethnic identity of women of Korean descent, such as socio-economic status, language proficiency, and their interest in Korea and Korean culture. The findings of this study are as follows: first, women of Korean descent's identity is not confined within the boundaries of their family, but in fact extends into the national realm. Secondly, their ethnic identity seems to be the result of a rational and strategic choice rather than the embodiment of cultured practices. The third implication is that the status of women of Korean descent's ethnic identity is not gender-stereotypical and they seem to be able to rationally craft their ethnic identity for their own benefit.

Key words: women of Korean descent, ethnic identity, ethnic pride

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Introduction

Through the 1960s and even into the 1970s, South Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world. Many Koreans looked at those who emigrated to other countries with somewhat envious eyes. Those who remained on the Korean Peninsula admired Koreans who succeeded in acquiring citizenship in developed nations, and even those able to escape Korea to less well-known and less wealthy countries. Considerable time has passed between then and now. South Korea's economic and cultural status has since risen significantly, and in recent years the phenomenon called the Korean Wave has spread to many parts of the world and reinforced it. Resultantly, we can speculate that the relationship between Koreans holding Korean nationality and people of Korean descent with other nationalities has changed somewhat.

With this situation in mind, the authors are curious to know whether the ethnic identity of people of Korean descent living abroad has undergone changes as well. Ethnic identity has a relative value. The degree of an individual's ethnic identity depends partly on what the identity can offer to the person. Ethnic identity becomes salient when one is outside of his or her country of origin and faces the burden of acculturating into a host country. When Korea was a little-known and poverty-stricken country, a person of Korean descent who moved to a more advanced country would have little incentive to emphasize his or her Korean ethnicity. Now, with South Korea's increased economic and cultural clout, a person of Korean descent could be much more inclined to identify with his or her Korean ethnicity.

When it comes to women of Korean descent, their allegiance to a Korean ethnic identity may differ from that of men of Korean descent. As an aspect of social identity, ethnic identity may not have been as relevant to Korean women since traditional Korean culture taught them that a women's identity is defined more by the private realm, such as the family, than by the public realm, such as a nation. Of course, such a public/private dichotomy did not prevent Korean women from joining the resistance movement against Japanese colonialism nor from enthusiastically supporting the Korean team in World Cup soccer matches. However, since the Korean ethnic identity package includes gender inequality ideology, a woman of Korean descent newly arriving in a more gender equal society could have more motivation to part with it than would a man. On the other hand, a Korean woman who is a carrier of a Korean cultural practice such as cooking might want to distinguish herself as an expert in Korean culture and wish to emphasize her Korean roots in order to compensate for her lack of cultural capital in the new environment. Now that the Korean Wave has a gender-targeted appeal, being mostly related to television dramas and pop music, women of Korean descent may be more motivated to align with it than are men of Korean descent.

Until now, women of Korean descent living in other countries have been the subject of little scholarly attention. Several studies on Korean women overseas dealt

with those in specific regions, such as the North America or central Asia, and have recounted country-specific situations and certain episodic stories within their narrowly defined experiences (Park, 2015). No study on the broad general category of women of Korean descent has been attempted, apparently due to the array of presumed and actual difficulties related to gaining access to them. Additionally, women of Korean descent's ethnic identity have not been under the spotlight since they were viewed not so much as individual citizens but as members of immigrant families. However, things have changed and Korean women have risen to become important players both within their families and on the world scene. Currently, Korean women are expected to show greater leadership both within and outside their families and they themselves may feel the need to play a more important part in their local Korean community. Therefore, we considered the time to be ripe for delving into women of Korean descent's ethnic identity as a token of their changed status. We wished to investigate women of Korean descent's ethnic identity in general and its differentials between countries and also the factors that influence it. To accomplish this objective, we attempted to survey Korean descent women over the world. According to Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Korean descent women overseas were 7,184,872 in 2015. To collect the largest sample, we utilized Korean Women International Network (KOWIN) organized by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in South Korea.

Theory

A. Ethnic identity and women

Phinney purports that ethnic identity is not fixed, but rather "changes in response to social psychological and contextual factors" (Phinney et al., 2001: 496). She also considers ethnic identity to be an aspect of acculturation to a new society. In this way, ethnic identity can be viewed as a kind of strategy or process of negotiation when adapting to a new environment. In other words, ethnic identity can function as a tool to maximize socio-demographic assets. In this sense, ethnic identity is related to a sense of pride. In practice, ethnic pride has been identified one of the constructs of ethnic identity. Phinney presents three constructs of ethnic identity: ethnic behaviors and practices; ethnic affirmation and belonging; and ethnic identity achievement (Phinney, 2002: 159-160). Ethnic behaviors and practices are "involvements in social activities with members of one's group and participation in cultural traditions." Ethnic affirmation and belonging is "a feeling of belonging to an ethnic group and attitude toward the group." Lastly, ethnic identity achievement refers to the final stage of the process of achieving ethnic identity and having a "secure sense of oneself as a member of a minority group." Phinney identified the second element, ethnic pride, as the key aspect of ethnic identity. Valk and Karu also pointed out 'ethnic pride and belonging' as one of two components of ethnic identity (Valk & Karu, 2001).

Studies on Korean ethnic identity generally report that people of Korean descent in

different parts of the world tend to bear a strong Korean ethnic identity (Hurv & Kim, 1984; Min, 1995, quoted in Lim, 1997; Yoon, 2014). In these studies, ethnic identity was also identified with ethnic pride and a sense of belonging. The ethnic identity measure of seven items used repeatedly in multiple studies on people of Korean descent replicate some of the questions found in Phinney's and in Valk and Karu's measures of ethnic pride. People of Korean descent's attention to their ethnic identity was explained by the assumption that in many parts of the world they were visibly distinct from the majority of the population and they sought to compensate for their low status through ethnic identity (Yoon, 2014, 67). In other studies on people of Korean descent, ethnic identity was considered in terms of ethnic identification, in other words, whether they think of themselves as Korean or as a member of the country to which they emigrated (they were asked their subjective proportion of personal membership in Korea and in the other country) (Yoon, 1997; 1999; 2002; Park & Yu, 2008). In a study of people of Korean descent in the U.S. and the C.I.S., Park & Yu found that most subjects in both countries tended to identify themselves as Korean. In Yoon's study (2002), while both were strong, people of Korean descent's Korean ethnic identification was stronger in the U.S. than in Russia. Yoon attributed this to the shorter history of residence of people of Korean descent in the U.S.

The effect of gender on ethnic identity has been examined only tentatively. Martinez and Dukes (1997) investigated the effect of gender on ethnic identity among different ethnic groups in the United States and found that its impact varies. For example, in minority ethnic groups such as blacks and Asians, women show a greater ethnic identity than do men. Although the researchers attempted to explain this as women's gender-minority experience sensitizing them to their ethnic status and thus reinforcing their ethnic identity, this reasoning does not explain the conflicting fact that white males report a higher ethnic identity than do white females. On top of this, among other ethnic minority groups such as Native Americans and Hispanics, gender differences in ethnic identity were less conspicuous. The additional fact that the ethnic identity of these two groups differs markedly (the first lower and the latter higher than average) does not help to fit this discrepancy into perspective.

Other studies did not specifically measure women's ethnic identity, but examined its influence on social and psychological states such as self-esteem, well-being, and leadership (Phinney et al., 2001; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000; Barry, Bernard & Beitel, 2006). Some studies investigated the influence of women's ethnic identity on their career choices (Gushue & Whitson, 2006). In these, the role of ethnic identity in women's psychology and choices was not coherent. Also, it was not gender per se so much as gender ideology that mediates the relationship between ethnic identity and psychological state.

There has been little research performed on gender differences in the ethnic identity of people of Korean descent. In a study on Korean-Japanese adolescents, females of Korean descent showed a higher average score of Korean ethnic identity than did males, and the difference was statistically significant. However, the authors did not

attempt to explain the meaning of this difference (Im & Kim, 2008, 404). Other studies on women of Korean descent did not precisely focus on their ethnic identity, but did show that it was an important component of their identity and exerted a strong influence on their attitudes and behaviors. One study investigating the acculturation process of Korean women living in the U.S. and married to an American spouse suggested that their love of Korean food was an embodied form of ethnic identity and demonstrated their attachment to Korean culture, despite their stated opinions to the contrary (Park, 2015). Other studies of Korean wives who immigrated to the U.S. dealt with their ambivalence toward their ethnic identity, which was tied to traditional patriarchal ideology, and their vacillation between newly-acquired gender equality ideals and allegiance to Confucian patriarchal ideology (Lim, 1997). The authors stated that gender equality ideology was endorsed by women's emerging status as breadwinners but it was superseded by strategy of respecting family headship to ensure the survival of the whole family. In other studies comparing perceptions of motherhood between Korean and Chinese mothers living in London, Korean ethnicity was found to encourage greater commitment to the parenting role rather than breadwinning, differing from the result among the Chinese subjects (Lim, 2015). These findings showed that ethnic identity is an important aspect of women of Korean descent's selves and their relationships to family and society, and helps us to understand them in a more profound manner.

B. Factors contributing to ethnic identity

In the preceding studies on people of Korean descent, ethnic identity was not often examined as a dependent variable, indicating that they were not interested in identifying factors that influence ethnic identity. This may have been due to the assumed homogeneity and fixity of Korean ethnic identity in a particular setting. In other words, researchers tended to observe Korean ethnic identity as a group identity and did not presume there to be variation within members of the group. Instead, these studies attempted to ascertain more precisely how Korean ethnic identity impacted people of Korean descent rather than what influenced the construction of their ethnic identity. For example, Yoon (2002) investigated what influence Korean-Americans' and -Canadians' ethnic identity exerted on their selection of jobs, spouses, friends, food, and ways of thinking. In the few studies that did address factors influencing ethnic identity, the most frequently tested variables of influence were the country of residence, generation since immigration, and their language proficiency. Yoon (2014) showed that people of Korean descent in the Commonwealth of Independent States showed an above-average Korean ethnic identity, which was slightly correlated to their proficiency in Korean. On the other hand, proficiency in Russian turned out to be more strongly correlated to Korean ethnic identity, especially among those who demonstrated both strong ethnic (Korean) and national (CIS) identity. This phenomenon may be due to the fact that people of Korean descent in the CIS tend to use Russian more frequently and fluently than they do Korean. Another explanation could

be that the fluency of the language of the country of residence is a more critical factor influencing Korean ethnic identity. In terms of generation since immigration, in another study of people of Korean descent in the U.S., Yoon found that as the generations since immigration passed, their Korean ethnic identity weakened (1996). Korean culinary culture was also identified as a factor that led them to recognize their Korean ethnicity in another study on people of Korean descent in Central Asia (Yugai Illya, 1998, quoted in Yoon, 2014).

While it is reasonable to assume that the place of residence, generation, and language proficiency of immigrants are all variables that influence ethnic identity, there are many untested variables that could shed further light on the nature of Korean ethnic identity. For example, if ethnic identity is related to a sense of pride, factors concerning individual socio-economic standing such as educational attainment, income, and profession can also influence ethnic identity. Also, personal interest in and attachment to Korea and Korean culture can increase a sense of belonging to a Korean ethnic group. Especially taking the current fashion for Korean media and food into consideration, interest in these elements can be factors of influence. Emotional closeness to Korea can serve as a factor, too. Identifying such factors would help with the understanding of the nature of ethnic identity.

Based on this theoretical background, we devised two research questions. Firstly, we would like to explore women of Korean descent's ethnic identity in general, and also the difference by country. Secondly, we would like to determine specific factors that influence the ethnic identity of women of Korean descent, such as socio-economic status, language proficiency, and their interest in Korea and Korean culture.

Method

A survey was undertaken employing the convenience sampling method. The KOWIN has focal points in 18 countries⁴ with communities of people of Korean descent with populations of more than 2,000. Each focal point was commissioned to distribute survey questionnaires to more than 100 adult⁵ women of Korean descent in diverse groups, either face to face or via email.⁶ The survey was performed during a one-month period between the end of October and the end of November 2015. Out

⁴ The countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Spain, Turkey and the United States. The U.S. has two focal points.

⁵ The definition of adult accords with each country's particular definition; the youngest age was 18 years old.

⁶ Although guaranteeing diversity among respondents mainly depended on the ingenuity of focal points, they were directed to reach out to as diverse a group as possible in terms of age, region, and profession. The questionnaire was given either as a hard copy or online so that the people who live far from the focal point could be recruited. The completed questionnaires were sent to the researchers either by email or conventional mail.

of the 1,483 questionnaires collected, 1,403 were usable and were coded and analyzed using an SPSS package.

Independent variables

The independent variables consist of three categories: socio-economic status; language use and proficiency; and subjective sense of closeness to Korea and Korean culture.

The socio-economic status variables are age, income, educational attainment, generation since immigration, and participation in economic activities. Generation is categorized into 1st, 1.5, 2nd, 3rd and above. The first generation refers to those who were born in Korea and emigrated to another country as an adult. The term '1.5 generation' is applied to the children of the first generation who were born in Korea but emigrated to another country before coming of age.

The language category concerns whether they speak Korean more frequently and with greater proficiency than the language of the country to which they emigrated. Language proficiency is comprised of proficiency in reading and speaking Korean and proficiency in reading and speaking the language of the country to which they emigrated. It is measured on a four-point scale of 'not at all; can communicate with difficulty; can communicate; fluent.' In addition, language use concerns the language they use with their children, which can be answered by selecting 'other language; Korean and other language; Korean.'

The final category of subjective sense of closeness to Korea and Korean culture measures the respondents' interest in and comfort with Korea and Korean culture. It includes perceived emotional closeness to Korea, interest in Korean news, preference for Korean food, consumption of Korean food and consumption of Korean media such as television dramas and entertainment programs. Emotional closeness to Korea is measured on a five-point scale (1=close to the country of residence - 5=close to Korea). Interest in Korean news, preference for Korean food, and consumption of Korean media is measured on a four-point scale and daily consumption of Korean food on a three-point scale (1. Mostly follow the diet of the country of residence; 2. Combination of two countries' diets; 3. Mostly follow a Korean diet).

Dependent variable

Ethnic identity is the dependent variable. It consists of three items drawn from an ethnic identity measure of seven items frequently used in previous studies on people of Korean descent (Yoon, 2014, Yi, 2009; Yim & Kim, 2008). They are selected for their ease of response and consist of "Are you proud of being a person of Korean descent?" "Do you make efforts to learn Korean history, traditions, and customs?" and "Do you actively participate in Korean organizations and social groups based on common characteristics (such as hometown or school) or interests?" This was measured on a four-point scale (1. Strongly disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Agree; 4. Strongly agree). The reliability of the measure was $\alpha=.632$.

Result

Descriptive statistics

Out of the 1,403 respondents, 52.4% (764) were non-Korean nationals and 47.6% (639) were Korean nationals with permanent residency status in another country.⁷ The most prevalent nationality other than Korea was the United States (13.5%, 190), with the next five being China (10.5%, 147), Canada (5.8%, 81), Australia (4.3%, 61), Russia (3.8%, 54) and New Zealand (3.5%, 49). In terms of the country of current residence (in descending order), 16.8% (236) lived in the U.S., 7.6% (107) in Brazil, 7.4% (104) in Indonesia, 7.3% (102) in Guatemala, 7.2% (101) in Malaysia, 7.1% (100) in China.

<Table 1> No. of respondents by country of residence

Country of residence	No. of respondents
United States	236 (16.8%)
Brazil	107 (7.6%)
Indonesia	104 (7.4%)
Guatemala	102 (7.3%)
Malaysia	101 (7.2%)
China	100 (7.1%)
Australia	91 (6.5%)
New Zealand	89 (7.1%)
Argentina	62 (4.4%)
South Korea	56 (4.0%)
Russia	52 (3.7%)
Egypt	51 (3.6%)
Turkey	46 (3.3%)
France	42 (3.0%)
Spain	41 (2.9%)
Germany	22 (1.6%)
Japan	5 (0.4%)
n.a.	5 (0.4%)
total	1,403 (100%)

⁷ The reason there are so many Korean nationals with residency in other countries is that it is very difficult to obtain citizenship in some countries no matter how long they might live there. This is why the variable of country of residence is more significant than that of country of citizenship.

The age of the respondents fell between 19 and 92. Those in their fifties made up the most prevalent age group, comprising 33.8% (474).

<Table 2> age of respondents

(Unit: % (No. of respondents))

20s and below	30s	40s	50s	60s and above	n.a.	total
5. (77)	12.9 (181)	23.4 (329)	33.8 (474)	23.4 (329)	0.9 (13)	100 (1403)

In terms of generation since immigration, the first generation comprised 62.4% (875), the 1.5 generation 15.8% (222), the second 11% (155), and the third and above 8.9% (120). Even though average age grows younger as the generation becomes farther since immigration (correlation $-.252^{**}$), each generation has a full array of age distribution from the 20s to the 60s and above.

<Table 3> age distribution of each generation

(Unit: %)

generation	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s and above	total
1 st	2.4	7.3	24.7	38.1	27.6	100
1.5 th	10.9	23.6	17.7	32.7	15	100
2 nd	16.9	19.5	10.4	22.7	30.5	100
3 rd and above	4.2	25.2	39.5	24.4	6.7	100
total	5.6	12.9	23.2	34.3	24.0	100

The educational attainment of the respondents is somewhat high, with more than half (57.7%) of them having graduated from college (including both four- and two-year programs).

<Table 4> educational attainment rates of respondents

(Unit: % (No. of respondents))

High school graduation	Some college	College graduation	Graduate school graduation	n.a.	total
11.9 (156)	14.2 (187)	57.7 (809)	11.7 (164)	6.2 (87)	100 (1403)

Their economic participation rate is 74.2%, and the most frequent type of job is professional (lawyer, artist, professor, doctor, accountant, teacher, etc.) at 26.2%, followed by housewife at 20.9%, shop owner and self-employed at 15.6%, and office worker with 9.06%.

The average ethnic identity score was 3.0516, showing that the respondents have a positive ethnic identity at an above-average level. However, the levels of ethnic identity varied depending upon country of residence, with scores spanning between 3.4744 and 2.799 ($p=.000$). The country with the highest score was Russia (3.4744), followed by Canada (3.4031) and China (3.36). The next-highest scoring groups were the United States (3.1864), Egypt (3.098) and Indonesia (3.0833). The countries that scored lowest were Guatemala (2.799) and the Philippines (2.8116). New Zealand (2.8839) and Australia (2.8636) were the two next-lowest scoring countries. The score differentials by country of residence are not self-explanatory, except for the cases of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The high score for Canada can be explained by its endorsement of multiculturalism, and the low scores in Australia and New Zealand by their immigration policy of preference for whites. This result cannot be compared to those of previous studies which examined ethnic identity between countries, such as United States, Canada and the C.I.S. (including those inhabiting Russia) in which ethnic identity was defined by the perceived degree of Koreanness (Yoon, 1996; Park & Yu, 2008; Won, 2015). In Yoon's study, people of Korean descent in the U.S. turned out to have a stronger ethnic identity than those in Russia. (In other words, there were more people of Korean descent who felt a stronger degree of Koreanness in the U.S. than there were in Russia.)

Regression Analysis

To identify the variables which can predict the strength of Korean ethnic identity, a linear regression analysis with three models was performed. Model 1 introduces demographic variables such as age, generation since immigration, educational attainment, income and economic activity. Model 2 adds the variables of use and proficiency of language (both Korean and the language of the country where they reside). Model 3 includes subjective variables such as perceived emotional closeness to Korea, interest in Korean news, preference for Korean food, consumption of Korean food, and consumption of Korean media such as television dramas and entertainment programs. The first model reveals that all the socio-demographic variables except for income are correlated with ethnic identity at the statistical significance level of .000. This means that the older they are, the more educated they are, and the farther the generation since immigration to which they belong, their ethnic identity is stronger. Also, those who participate in economic activities have a stronger ethnic identity than those who do not. Income level does not influence ethnic identity. Model 2 shows that these same demographic variables remain positively correlated and language proficiency is related to ethnic identity only in the case of speaking proficiency in the language of the country where they reside ($p<.001$). Model 3 holds these same dem-

ographic variables relevant to ethnic identity, although the coefficients of economic activity and generation since immigration dropped to .013 and .077 from .187 and .135, respectively, at the significance level of $p < .05$. On the other hand, the coefficient of education increased from .078 to .140 ($p < .001$). This tells us that the influence of educational attainment becomes stronger as subjective variables are controlled. As for the language variables, while the correlation of language proficiency in the country of residence still holds true, the coefficient of the language used to communicate with children becomes significant at the $p < .01$ level. In other words, the respondents have a stronger ethnic identity if they use the language of the country of residence to communicate with their children. This result reveals that they use the language of the country of residence for communication with their children because of their proficiency in it. Thus, both the variable of language use and that of language proficiency show that the subjects have a better chance of reporting a Korean ethnic identity when they can better express themselves in the language of the country in which they reside. This finding is unexpected since it is contrary to the common belief that proficiency in the ethnic language would promote a strong sense of ethnic identity (Yoon, 2014, 66). On the other hand, Yoon's own finding in his study on people of Korean descent in the CIS that proficiency in Russian is more strongly related to Korean ethnic identity than is proficiency in Korean (ibid.) conforms to this finding. The conformability of the two results suggests that Korean ethnic identity becomes robust with linguistic integration into the society.

<Table 5> the regression model for ethnic identity

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β
Constant	1.834		1.525		.662	
Age	.009	.161***	.008	.140***	.006	.112***
Generation since immigration	.073	.135***	.053	.098*	.042	.077*
Education	.093	.187***	.089	.178***	.070	.140***
Income	.047	.058	.025	.031	-.002	-.002
Economic activity	.187	.156***	.164	.137***	.124	.103**
Proficiency in speaking Korean			.092	.090	.098	.096
Proficiency in reading Korean			.023	.020	-.038	-.032
Proficiency in reading the language of country of residence			-.045	-.075	-.013	-.021
Proficiency in speaking the language of country of residence			.106	.178**	.085	.143**
Language used with children			-.049	-.067	-.089	-.121**
Emotional closeness to Korea					-.026	.025

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β
Interest in news about Korea					.258	-.315***
Consumption of Korean media					-.001	-.003
Preference for Korean food					.174	.135***
Daily consumption of Korean food					-.013	-.014
R^2_{adj} (ΔR^2_{adj})	.089		.110(.021***)		.238(.128***)	
F	19.251***		12.471***		20.318***	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The variables which predict Korean ethnic identity, such as education, economic activity, and fluency in the language of the country in which they reside show an important function of social interaction in maintaining ethnic identity, since these variables are the tools that they can use to socialize in the society to which they have emigrated. We can hypothesize that more interaction with the new society makes them more self-conscious of their ethnic background. The newly-introduced subjective variables in model 3 also support this hypothesis. The subjective variables positively correlated with Korean ethnic identity, such as interest in news about Korea and preference for Korean food (with coefficients of .315 and .135, respectively ($p < .001$)) show the respondents' awareness of their different ethnic standing and their efforts to delve into their distinctness by paying attention to their own cultural differences. These variables reflect the respondents' cognitive choices and ideational orientation rather than their emotional attraction to Korea. On the other hand, variables which turned out to have no influence on ethnic identity, such as emotional closeness to Korea, consumption of Korean dramas and entertainment programs, and daily consumption of Korean food, are more or less emotionally charged and embodied traits of familiarity with and closeness to Korea. This shows that Korean ethnic identity is not so much an emotional attachment to Korea as a rational and purposeful choice of aligning oneself with Korea and Korean culture.

Discussion

Women of Korean descent as a group have rarely been a subject of research, perhaps because of their invisibility and inaccessibility. This invisibility, however, was partly a product of the patriarchal perspective of the research itself. Women of Korean descent were mainly regarded as private entities who were members of Korean immigrant families or families featuring international marriages. Therefore, while private aspects of their lives have been the focus of research, elements of their social identity, such as their ethnic identity, have not been scrutinized.

Our study is the first attempt to investigate women of Korean descent's ethnic pride as a component of ethnic identity. The result from our study that women of Korean descent generally demonstrate a strong degree of ethnic identity bears certain implications. First, women of Korean descent's identity is not confined within the boundaries of their family, but in fact extends into the national realm. In other words, they have a strong social identity. Furthermore, women of Korean descent seem to not only be aware of their ethnic roots, but also proud of them. They accept their status of belonging to two different worlds with a sense of pride. Another and more significant implication is that ethnic identity seems to be the result of a rational and strategic choice rather than the embodiment of cultured practices. For example, interest in news about Korea rather than consumption of Korean food and media programs is predictive of the degree of their ethnic identity. In other words, it is the choice to take an interest in Korea that increases their ethnic identity. In turn, it seems that better education is a prerequisite for taking interest in their ethnic roots and the ability to express themselves in the language of the resident country provides them with a footing for strategizing their ethnic background. It is interesting to find that they need to be better adapted to the country in which they reside in order to be able to consider their ethnic identity to be an asset. The variable of generation since immigration can be explained along the same lines. The farther their generation since immigration is, the better they should be equipped with language skills and adaptations suited to the new country and the better they can situate themselves. They therefore can express a stronger sense of Korean ethnic identity. Emotional closeness to Korea and the consumption of Korean pop culture and even Korean food do not seem to affect their sense of ethnic allegiance. The third implication is that the status of women of Korean descent's ethnic identity is not gendered, since it breaks with the stereotypical assumption of feminine clinging to their ethnic roots through engaging in Korean culture such as by watching Korean dramas and eating Korean food and by maintaining an emotional attachment to the country. To the contrary, women of Korean descent seem to be able to rationally craft their ethnic identity for their own benefit by actively integrating into the society in which they reside.

The study of ethnic identity is important for many reasons. Ethnic identity supports the subjective existence of the ethnic group. A shared ethnic identity functions like a net that links people of Korean descent all over the world. With the increasing naturalization in Korea of people from other countries and the disintegration of the popular belief that Koreans are a unique genotype, the conceptual nature of ethnic identity is becoming more significant. Also, with more and more women of Korean descent entering the public sphere, the overall allegiance to Korean ethnic identity will only increase. So far, the discussion on Korean ethnic identity has neglected to include women's side of the story. This study is an attempt to point out the increasing awareness of their ethnic identity among women of Korean descent.

However, this study has certain limits. One is the method of sampling. Since the

overall population distribution is unknown and we used convenient sampling, sample representability is not guaranteed. We attempted to provide demographic information in our discussion of the survey results in order to offset this limit. Second, the survey is confined to women of Korean descent, so gender comparison is not possible. Therefore, our assertions regarding the characteristics of women of Korean descent can be challenged when a gender comparison is made possible.

Finally, we propose that further research on the delineation of national differences in ethnic identity should be undertaken. As discussed earlier, the ethnic identity of women of Korean descent varies depending upon the country in which they reside. Even though we hypothesized that a country's policy of multiculturalism (in the case of Canada) or discriminative immigration policy (Australia and New Zealand) could be differential factors, it is beyond the scope of this research to provide causal factors. It would be quite revelatory to identify positive and negative influence factors for ethnic identity.

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