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Ethnic Culture and Its Impact on Immigrants' Identity Formation: The Case of Korean Immigrants in the U.S.

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Abstract

This paper explores the extent to which the exposure to Korean popular culture has influence on the formation of American national identity by Korean immigrants. While a great number of studies on immigrants' identity formation have identified various factors, such as socioeconomic and intergroup factors of the host societies, which potentially affect immigrants' assimilation into their host countries, many studies have been negligent to look at the impact of the transnational cultural consumption on immigrants' identity formation. In this paper, we hypothesize that the increasing contact with their homeland culture through the media consumption make immigrants more likely to have a sense of closeness with their home countries and less likely to be assimilated into the host countries. This study finds no strong empirical evidences that Korean immigrants in the U.S. who are more exposed to the Korean popular culture, namely, Korean Wave are less likely to endorse American national identity. Further, there are little evidences that Korean immigrants' increasing media consumption of the Korean popular culture moderates the positive impact of both socioeconomic and intergroup factors on American identity. These results raise considerable doubt about the effect of the consumption of ethnic culture on the identity formation by ethnic minorities in the U.S.

Keywords

Ethnic Identity, Identity Formation, Transnationalism, Korean Immigrants, Korean Popular Culture

1. Introduction

The process of immigrants' identity formation in their host countries had been

depicted based on the perspective of assimilation theory that emphasizes how immigrants reorient their identities from their home countries to settle and become incorporated into host countries [1] [2] [3]. However, because of the growing pattern of immigration based on transnationalism, this approach has been replaced by new paradigms that focus on the multi-local and multi-cultural identity construction among immigrants. These transnational perspectives posit that migration is on-going processes in which migrants engage in life patterns and social relationships linking their settlements in the host and home countries through routinized economic, social, and cultural connection [4] [5] [6]. From this perspective, significant research has documented that immigrants construct their multiple identities by simultaneously taking on obligations in both the host and the home countries [7] [8]. While the process of transnational identity formation represents a significant and growing pattern of post migration experiences, some immigrants are less mobile than other immigrants are and live in relatively localized contexts of their settlements [9] [10] [11] because their mobility are possibly limited by some reason, such as restrictive immigration policies, geographical and economic distances to the sending communities, or high costs of travel [11]. Although these less mobile immigrants are not embedded in transnational exchanges, obligations, and social relationships in the same way as those highly mobile immigrants, they still display flexible and multi-cultural identity formation by pulling together identity constructs drawn from both the sending and the host countries [10] [12], so they define their social locations and identities often go beyond geographical boundaries, as their sense of belonging stretches over several "imagined communities" [13]. And, the consumption of the culture of their home countries is the key to make immigrants form and maintain a multiple and flexible identity because they are encouraged to keep the cultural legacy of their home countries [14]-[19].

Specifically, a great deal of studies on the formation of the immigrants' identity in the U.S. suggested that immigrants' assimilation into American society after settling in the U.S. is influenced by several factors, such as the level of education, English proficiency, place of birth, length of life in the U.S., socioeconomic backgrounds, and the residential areas [20] [21] [22] [23]. However, while such socioeconomics and cultural factors in immigrants' host countries are important indicators that affect the development of racial and ethnic identities among immigrant groups, scholars have not paid a great deal of attention to external factors that derive from their home countries. In other words, some immigrants might consider reconstructing their identity in the increasing pattern of transnational framework because they strongly resist showing an unconditional support for the idea of assimilation to American society in that American national identity is a sole identity in their identity structure and control the way of their lives in the U.S. [17] [18] [19] [24] [25].

In order to better understand how these external factors that are developed from immigrants' home countries influence the pattern of the identity formation by immigrants in their host countries, this study focuses on the transnational

activities and their impact on immigrants' managing the national identity of their host societies. Especially, the pattern of managing American identity by Korean immigrants in the U.S. is closely examined in this study because Korean immigrants are one of the exemplary ethnic groups in American society to examine a mechanism of how ethnic identity is formed in a host society based the process of cultural duality they share from the unique features of culture and socioeconomic characteristics in both the host country and home country [26] [27] [28] [29]. Thus, this study aims to examine the extent to which Korean immigrants preserve American identity in the circumstance that they are consistently exposed to Korean popular culture that has been developed by the rapidly growing entertainment industry in Korea, known as Korean Wave [30].

Before scrutinizing the main research issues of this study, this paper briefly examines previous literature on immigrants' identity formation and explores some major factors that have influence on immigrants' identity formation in their host societies. Furthermore, this study assesses how much impact those factors make on immigrants' assimilation into their host society that is closely related with the formation of a national identity by immigrants. Then, this paper examines the consumption of ethnic popular culture and its impact on immigrants' identity formation, especially focusing on the global popularity of Korean popular culture, namely, the Korean Wave and its impact on the formation of American identity by Korean immigrants.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sociological Perspectives on Immigrants' Identity Formation

Generally speaking, the issue of identity formation is one of the major research agenda in the discipline of sociology. From sociological perspectives, one's identity formation is viewed as self-reflexive, so it is not innately or unconsciously given but socially and deliberately constructed with an actor's efforts to construct his/her identity under certain external influences [31] [32] [33] because of the work of agency that is created by an actor who is not only self-conscious of the external condition but also able to have some impact on it [34]. Thus, the identity formation is more an active concept than a passive concept.

Based on the viewpoint highlighting the role of self-conscious agency on one's identity formation, thus, many previous studies focused on the process of assimilation and its impact on the formation of identity by immigrants. In other words, those previous studies mainly attempted to find out how immigrants become a self-reflexive actor when they construct their identity in the process of assimilation [35] [36] [37] [38] [39]. For example, some studies suggested that immigrants reconstruct their identity as a result of the assimilation into the host societies when they are conscious of the social pressure in the host societies that makes immigrants anxious for being "unmarked" in their host societies by acquiring the basic habits, attitudes, and mode of life of an embracing culture [6] [40]-[45].

In recent years, however, there has been growing efforts to explain immigrants' identity formation within the framework of transnationalism in order to document and elaborate the process of the transnational identity formation based on multi-local as well as multi-layered and fluid interpretations of identities among many immigrants who had "their feet in two societies" [46]. Therefore, the process of identity formation by immigrants in the transnational context not only challenge the linkage between geographical space and social space but also are involved in the dynamics production of power and difference in the contexts of several institutions and nations [47]. Within this viewpoint, immigrants' identities are formed by the multi-institutional influence in the host and home societies rather than the uni-institutional efforts in their host societies. Thus, some immigrants construct multi-local and flexible identities because they are self-conscious of the change in the pattern of immigration due to the increasing pattern of transnational migration, and it results in the creation of agency in that they actively engage in the social, political, economic, and even cultural affairs in both host and sending communities [33] [34]. This new perspective undoubtedly presents a critical challenge to the mainstream view on immigrants' identity formation, which has previously posited the host countries as the primary and exclusive context of immigrants' identities [37] [48].

While diverse global processes and technological developments promote transnational practices in general, immigrants maintain the varying degree of transnational practices [11]. Some organize their daily lives and communities by making on-going economic and social connections to their communities back home, while others live in relatively localized contexts of the host society once they settle down. However, even if they do not live in transnational social fields, many immigrants engaged in the process of identity constructions, which involved interesting cognitive dynamics other than streamlined pathways to assimilation to the U.S. society [49]. It is caused by the fact that the work of identity formation is not passive but active term with the significant influence of actors' involvement. In other words, these identity works are organized within the dialectic interplay between structural forces and agency that deal with the changes in structural condition [32] [34]. Mobilizing multiple groups within and beyond their home countries exemplify their boundary-crossing practices that are occurring in a sociomental space in the absence of sustained exchanges of social and economic remittances with the sending communities [13] [26] [50] [51]. Thus, the nature of active agency and the structural changes caused by the globalization make many immigrants more active in their identity construction based on the identity formation in the transnational context regardless of having the high level of physical mobility [26].

However, even if immigrants construct their identities in the host countries that are flexible and fluid in the context of transnationalism, they are not the same in terms of the flexibility and mutability of identity in the host society. Some immigrants are still willing to reshape their identity by adopting and implementing

the way of life the dominant group in their host societies, but others are hesitant about reconstructing their identity by adopting the dominant culture of their host societies. It is mainly caused by the degree of assimilation into the host society in the process of their identity construction. The next section will briefly survey previous studies on the causal factors that contribute to immigrants' assimilation into the host societies because they are closely related with how immigrants construct the national identity of their host countries.

2.2. The Factors to Immigrants' Identity Formation

The previous studies on ethnic relation discussed several factors that are crucial for the identity formation by immigrants in their host societies that include socio-economic factors and intergroup factors. These factors stimulate or hamper immigrants to reshape their identity in their host societies based on the host country's cultural principle.

First, immigrants' sensibility to the belief and norm of the cultural outgroup and skills to interact with others in the host countries can affect the ease with which they are assimilated into the core aspects of the host country's culture [52]. For instance, some scholars argued that the lack of English proficiency creates barriers that make it hard for immigrants to be assimilated to American society [53] [54] [55]. As a result, language is considered as a core component of sociocultural competence, so immigrants who are generally proficient in English may embrace American national identity more actively than those who lack basic English-language abilities [56].

Some scholars suggested that immigrants who are anxious about their economic circumstances in the host countries are more likely to keep close ties to their home countries [57] and to maintain a strong ethnic identity because of the increasing dissatisfaction with their lives in the host societies that lead immigrants to have the growing disinclination of assimilation into their host societies [58] [59] [60] [61] [62]. Scholars also found that the marital status of immigrants affect the degree of the assimilation of immigrants into the culture of the host countries. Especially, the intermarriage between immigrants and members of the majority group increase the degree of the assimilation of immigrants into the culture of their host societies. For instance, the intermarriage between immigrants and whites in the U.S. makes immigrants more likely to embrace American national identity [63] [64] [65].

Many scholars have also focused on the impact of some intergroup relationship on immigrants' identification with a majority group of the host societies. Some studies suggested that when immigrants experience interethnic relations that are stable and legitimate, they are more likely to conform to the values of the majority group in their host societies [66] [67] [68]. On the other hand, when there is a strong social rejection in the host societies, such as social discrimination from the majority group, immigrants are more likely to maintain their ethnic identity [69] [70] [71] [72].

Furthermore, a weak identification among immigrants in their host societies is more likely to occur when immigrants experience a strong cultural discordance with the majority group in their host societies, so some immigrants are willing to maintain their cultural practice [73] [74] or are forced by other in-group members to stick to the culture of their home countries [75]. Thus, it makes the negative impact on immigrants' having the national identity of their host countries due to the anticipation of loyalty conflicts, in-group pressures, incompatible values and norms, and perceived hostilities [76]. One of the factors that make a strong cultural discordance is religious values and beliefs immigrants live up to in their home societies. Some studies showed that Muslim immigrants in Western societies face more obstacles to make an effortless assimilation into their host societies compared with other immigrant's group because the religious values and beliefs they have are incompatible to those of Western societies [77] [78]. However, other studies find the positive relationship between ethnic and national identification [79]. Cross-national studies found that immigrants whose religious identity is Christianity more easily assimilate into the European societies [80] [81] [82] [83]. In addition, S. Y. Lee (2007) argued that Christianity is used to bridge the cultural gap Korean immigrants have in American society because of the high level of congeniality between Korean community and the mainstream American society in terms of religious beliefs and values [84]. So, Korean immigrants whose religious belief is based on Christianity are more active in identifying themselves with mainstream American society because they find this religious belief as a major tool to make them more comfortable to assimilate into mainstream American society [85]. Based on surveying these previous studies, it is assumed that various cultural practices immigrants bring into the host countries makes a significant impact on their life satisfaction in the host societies and affects the extent to which immigrants assimilate into the host societies and have the strong identification with the majority group of the host societies. The following section will further examine the culture of immigrants' home countries and its impact on national identity in the host societies.

2.3. Cultural Effect as Soft Power and National Identity

The cultural consumption has been one of the major topics for many previous studies on the identity formation by immigrants in their host countries. Piontkowski *et al.* (2002) argued that there exists internal conflict between the host community and immigrants over the issue of immigrants' cultural practice [86]. Verkuyten and Martinovic (2012) argued "immigrants can develop negative attitudes toward the majority because they prefer to maintain the culture of their homeland to a higher degree than they think is accepted by the host community" (p. 97) [87]. Riggins (1992) also suggested that the increase of ethnic media consumption makes immigrants harder to adjust in the host societies, while they are driven to keep their own cultural legacy [15]. As a result, it suggests that the extent to which the formation of national identity of the host countries by

immigrants partly depends on immigrants' exposure to the culture of their home countries because the high level of exposure to their own culture helps them to form and maintain a strong attachment to their home countries.

Generally speaking, immigrant culture is referred to as their original culture of a group, consisting of the ways of living, including languages, beliefs, behavioral norms, values, and communication pattern which immigrants bring with them from their home countries [88]. Culture in the homeland society is a major component that shapes immigrants' behavior patterns in their host countries by influencing assimilation either negatively or positively. Particularly, immigrants' having the national identity of their host countries needs to be addressed by some conditions that are grounded in popular culture and the everyday life. While scholars in cultural studies have not clearly defined what popular culture means, they loosely define that popular culture is considered as the culture which is prevalent among the people [89] or is widely favored or well-liked by many people [90]. Edensor (2002) points out "culture is constantly in a process of becoming, of merging out of the dynamism of popular culture and everyday life whereby people make and remake connections between the local and the national, between the national and the global, between the everyday and the extraordinary" (p. vii) [89]. According to MacDonald (1983), popular culture creates a homogeneous in-group culture, as a group of individuals is linked to each other by common interests, work, traditions, values, and sentiments [91].

And, popular culture is able to form a country's national identity not only because it further subdues the spirit and value of the mass public by the ideological messages it transmits, but also because it can form the value of the middle class who possess knowledge of popular culture and is surrounded by popular cultural forms and practices [89] [92]. Furthermore, national identity is not solely formulated by the traditional culture—the idea of uncommercial and ritualized folk practices that reflects the true nature of the national context—but reformulated by popular culture that "is not fixed but negotiated by the social dialogue and influenced by the contexts in which it is produced and used" ([89]: p. 17). However, does the increasing consumption of popular cultures from their home countries influence immigrants' identity formation in their host countries?

Several scholars point out the role of media exposure on viewers' perception. Gerbner (1998) suggested that consistent exposure to media believed to cultivate and nourish certain types of collective consciousness [93]. Furthermore, Morgan & Shanahan (2010) argued that a consistent exposure to a certain media contributes to viewers' beliefs and perspectives [94]. These explanations indicate that exposure to ethnic media helps immigrants to maintain positive perceptions about their home countries. Therefore, the ethnic media affects immigrants to maintain or strengthen their ethnic and cultural identity by making easy to contact everyday news, entertainment, and information in the home countries [95]. Riggins (1992) also suggested that the increasing consumption of ethnic media influences immigrants to increase a strong ethnic cohesion and to preserve their

heritage [15]. For instance, Korean immigrants exercise a strong affinity for Korean cultural identity by consuming Korean media more frequently than U.S. media [96].

Based on the result of these previous studies on cultural studies and ethnic media consumption, it can be argued that immigrants who have more access to ethnic media or the homeland online media as a source of entertainment and information might be less interested in assimilating into the mainstream culture of their host countries. In other words, the consistent exposure to the popular culture of their home countries makes immigrants less likely to construct their identity that is congruent with the mainstream culture in the host societies and moderates the effect of socioeconomic and intergroup factors on the formation of immigrants' identity in the host societies. In order to further examine the role of consuming popular culture of immigrants' homeland on their identity formation as a part of acculturation in the host countries, thus, I briefly present Korean immigrants in the U.S. and their popular culture to address how Korean popular culture has received a great attention in America and how the Korean popular culture has influenced Korean community in the U.S. In addition, I present some data that show the increasing Korean media channels (Radio and TV) and Korean media subscribers over times.

2.4. Cultural Effect as Soft Power and National Identity

As the result of the immigration policy reform in 1965, the U.S. over the last several decades has hosted the largest number of immigrants [97]. For example, there are approximately 50 million immigrants in the United States hosted in 2017 that is about 19% of the world's total and is four times of the number of immigrants hosted by Germany which is the second largest host county [98] [99]. Of those 50 million immigrants in the U.S., approximately 12.8 million immigrants are identified as Asian immigrants in 2014 [100], and the number of Asian immigrants grew from 491,000 in 1960 that represents a 2597 percent increase [101]. Moreover, the number of Asians moving to the U.S. has surpassed Hispanics for the first time ever in 2010, and this highly diverse and fast-growing group was comprised about 6 percent of the U.S. population [102]. Like the rapidly growing population of other Asian Americans in the U.S., the Korean American population, that includes foreign-born and naturalized citizens, has been also one of the fastest-growing populations in the U.S that made up about 1.9 million and was the fifth largest Asian American subgroup in 2014 [103].

Paying special attention to the significant influences of Protestant churches on Korean American communities,[1] the active participation in Christianity in Korea promotes Korean immigrants to form their American identities beyond their distinctive ethnic identities, and it is easier for them to assimilate into the mainstream American culture when compared to other ethnic groups in the U.S.

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[1]According to 2012 Asian-American survey from Pew Research Center, only two of Asian Americans are majority Christian: Filipino American (86% Christian) and Korean American (71% Christian).

[104] [105] [106]. However, compared to other Asian immigrants, Korean immigrants, who are most homogenous in language and culture, are most likely to be slow respondents to the American society by retaining their ethnic identity [107], and one of the major factors that motivate Korean immigrants to preserve their own ethnic culture comes from their active involvement in the promotion of the Korean Wave, the increase in the global popularity of Korean popular culture.

The Korean popular culture became a huge hit around the world with the development of digital technologies and social media, such as YouTube, social network sites (SNSs), and smartphones in the 21st century [108] [109]. People look up Korean music videos and TV shows they like and saw other items of similar genres from South Korea in the "related videos" section [110]. Out of curiosity, they click the videos, and if they like what they see and hear, they share them with their friends and family [111] [112]. Thus, the popularity of Korean popular culture has spread rapidly in the world with no trouble and made Korea one of the major cultural powerhouses in the world that is reflected by its current global ranking ranging from 4th to 13th place in games, film, music, publishing and broadcasting [113].

The Korean Wave contributes to making the sustainable economic development in Korea. According to the 2016 content industry data from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, sales of the cultural content industry steadily increased 4.7 percent a year on average from 2012 to 2016 despite the economic slowdown at home and abroad, and the rate of content sales growth in 2016 stood at 5.3 percent, which was nearly two times higher than 2.7 percent of Korea's economic growth rate last year [114]. Moreover, this global popularity of Korean culture plays a crucial role in maintaining a steady growth in Korea's overall exports around the world. According to the data by Korea Creative Content Agency, the average annual growth for Korea's exports of culture content reached 8% for five years after 2011, and its growth rate rose 9.7 percent despite a 5.9 percent fall in Korea's total exports in 2016 indicating that Korean Wave led in overall exports [115].

While the greatest growth and strength for the Korean popular culture is in its export to countries in Asia, such as China and Japan, many Korean entertainment industries look to the U.S. as a major target market because of the size of its cultural contents market. The data prepared by Korea Creative Content Agency shows that the U.S. is at the top of the cultural contents market list with a market share of 32.3%, which accounts for one-third of the global cultural industry [116]. In addition, the Korean Wave helps to increase the exportation of Korean cultural contents to the U.S. According to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the Korean popular media industry has exported over $235 million worth of product to America in 2014 that was 11% of the total exports of Korean cultural contents [116]. When it comes to the growth of exports in the cultural contents industry, there was 4.9% year on year increase of exports of

Korean cultural contents to the U.S. from 2010 to 2014 [116].

In addition to financial benefits, the Korean Wave can make a positive influence on Korean international relations because of Korea's cultural diplomacy the Korean Wave helps to promote [117] [118]. According to G. Lee (2009), the Korean Wave, that makes Korea a new global cultural hub, can contributes to its cultural power by providing opportunities for the manipulation of Korea's images and extending a network effect of Korean popular culture, so it eventually helps Korean sojourners to have pride in their homeland when they experience the increasing popularity of Korean popular culture in their host countries [119].

Furthermore, the Korean Wave can make Korean immigrants taking pride in their homeland culture because it may allow them to collect symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu (1984), symbolic capital is "the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honorability" (p. 291) [45]. Bourdieu (1993) also referred symbolic capital as "economic or political capital … a 'credit' which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees 'economic' profits" (p. 75) because it is "degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honor … founded on a dialectic of knowledge (connaissance) and recognition (reconnaissance)" (p. 7) [120]. Thus, symbolic capital can be referred to as the resources available to an individual based on honor, prestige or recognition, and serves as value that one holds within a culture. Therefore, the Korean Wave may help Korean immigrants to acquire symbolic capital, allowing them not only to take pride in their homeland culture but also to fit more easily into their host societies because the host societies can have more knowledge and interest in the Korean popular culture and recognize the worth of Korean popular culture. Thus, even though Korean immigrants are typically ethnic minorities in the host countries and their identities are highly susceptible to the views of the native hosts, it is expected that the Korean Wave can make a positive impact on Korean identity becomes a more salient factor in the interaction. In other words, it is likely that Korean cultural contents bring along a better, updated image of Korea to the mainstream of American society. The enhanced Korean symbolic capital (increased knowledge, or "connaissance" and increased recognition value or "reconnaissance") may aid Korean transnationals in the U.S. to feel an increased sense of confidence when interacting with Americans, due to increased affiliation with the Korean [120].

Consequently, by experiencing this phenomenal success of Korean popular culture that makes Korean immigrants in the U.S. a more loyal follower of their homeland culture, it can make some level of impact on the formation and management of American identity by Korean immigrants in the U.S. because the Korean Wave makes Korean identity more noticeable in the identity structure of Korean immigrants [25]. Thus, the main purpose of this study is to test the following hypotheses:

Due to the influence of Korean Wave,

H1: Korean immigrants are more likely to want to associate themselves with their Korean ethnic identity than American identity.

H2: The impact of socioeconomic and intergroup factors on the preservation of American identity by Korean immigrants are more likely to be lessened.

The following section will present the key findings based on the analyzing the data.

3. Data and Empirical Analyses

By analyzing the Korean American survey, this study explores how the effect of frequent exposure to the Korean popular culture through accessing to the Korean ethnic media will affect Korean immigrants' maintaining American identity, and how it mediates the impact of potential socioeconomic and intergroup factors on their preservation of American identity. To test these hypotheses, it is important to find adequate survey data that addresses Korean immigrants' national identity and their media consumption on the Korean popular culture. Further, the data should cover a large Korean immigrant population conducted on a national scale. However, these types of survey data do not exist yet if a new survey is not designed and conducted to meet all these goals. The only survey data that is close to my purpose is Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS) data, which was conducted in 2000-2001 [121].

3.1. Sample

The PNAAPS is the nation's first multiethnic, multilingual, and multicity study on the political opinion of adults of the six largest Asian American ethnic descents who live in five major metropolitan areas in U.S., Los Angeles, New York, Honolulu, San Francisco, and Chicago. While the resulting sample includes a total of 1218 adults of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Filipino, and Asian Indian or Pakistani (South Asian), the sample has 168 Korean, which is generally considered enough [122].[2] The survey includes ethnic identity, acculturation, homeland politics, voting behavior and political participation, political ideology, partisanship, group discrimination, various socioeconomic issues, and media consumption. In order to focus on Korean Americans' behavior, I only select 168 Korean American observations from the PNAAPS sample. The data include 73 (43%) male, 95 (57%) female, and 121 (72%) married person. Their average age is 46 with an average of 13 years living in the U.S.

3.2. Major Variables and Statistical Analyses

The dependent variable is the levels of Korean immigrants' national identity in American society. The national identity variable is derived from the ethnic identity question available in the PNAAPS, in which respondents are asked to report how an individual think himself/herself as an American, an Asian American, an Asian, a Korean American, or a Korean. While the ideal measure of national identity should include a scale to measure "how important," "to what extent," and "how well" respondents feel as American [123], the actual PNAAPS survey

[2]While larger sample, in general, are better than smaller samples, it is usually acceptable if the sample cover the population between 30 and 500 [122].

only asks respondents to choose one ethnic group that they think is most likely to represent themselves. The actual survey results show that only 5 respondents think they are American. Since this increases the small-sample bias when conducting maximum likelihood estimation of the logistic model,[3] I posit that all respondents who identify themselves as American, Asian American, and Korean American are more likely to endorse their national identity in American Creed [124]. Thus, the national identity is a dummy variable that equals to 1 if he or she believes himself/herself as American, Asian American, and Korean American, and 0 if he or she believes himself/herself as only Asian or Korean.

One of the major independent variables is the degree of attachment to Korean popular culture by operationalizing it as the consumption of Korean media. That is, the independent variable is the frequency of exposure to the Korean popular culture throughout the Korean mass media. Generally speaking, ethnic media is a carrier of immigrants' home culture [95]. Although the dependent variable should properly measure the Korean immigrants' media consumption for the purpose of getting information of the Korean popular culture or enjoying such Korean popular cultural products as dramas, music, and movies, the question that asks how often a respondent uses ethnic media does not specify some target programs related to Korean popular culture. As this question includes respondents' media consumption as a source of entertainment, however, the results from this question can be used as the proxy to measure Korean immigrants' exposure to the Korean popular culture through media consumption.

In addition, the model includes six major independent variables. Based on the potential socioeconomic factors, as already discussed above, I include the length of stay in the U.S., the level of education, income, and English proficiency. The model also captures the impact of intergroup factors on national identity by specifying whether a respondent have ever experienced discrimination in the U.S. and whether a respondent belongs to any organization.

As a final set of independent variables, the model includes the multiplicative interaction terms of each major independent variable and Korean immigrants' media consumption. These terms allow for a test of the hypothesis that the Korean immigrants' growing awareness to the Korean popular culture through the media moderates the impact of the socioeconomic and intergroup factors on their American identity. **Appendix 1** presents the questionnaires that represent the dependent and major independent variables selected in this study.

In addition to typical socioeconomic and intergroup characteristics, I also control for potential alternative explanations for Korean immigrants' national identity. Social identity theory suggests that national identity is less influenced by political ideology or partisanship [66] [125].[4] Political ideology of a respondent is measured on a 5-point scale, coded as 5 (strong conservative) to 1 (strong

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[3]For more detail, see [124].

[4]Social identity theory suggests that immigrants see themselves included in one social group [66]. That is, individuals exercise greater adherence to group norms even when members hold differing beliefs [66].

liberal), while party identification is measured on a 7-point scale, coded as 7 (strong Republican) to 1 (strong Democrats). The model also controls for respondents' age, gender, and marital status.

In order to show the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables, I used a regression model. However, the dependent variable (a respondent's national identity) in this study is dummy variable that equals to 1 if he or she believes himself/herself as American, Asian American, and Korean American, and 0 if he or she believes himself/herself as only Asian or Korean. So, I used a logistic regression model rather than multiple regression model. First, I used a logit model with maximum likelihood estimation to examine the relationship between a respondent's national identity and various independent variables, including ethnic media consumption, socioeconomic factors, intergroup factors, and control variables. And then, I used another logit model to examine the relationship between one's national identity and various independent variables. However, in the second step, I added a set of independent variables that measure the influence of the interaction between those major independent variables and the consumption of popular media on national identity. This is largely aimed to highlight the role of ethnic media consumption on the formation of national identity among Korean Americans.

4. Findings

Table 1 presents the results of the base logit estimation without including the multiplicative interaction terms. The model calculates robust standard errors to correct for diagnosed heteroskedasticity. The baseline model provides support for the impact of several major variables on national identity.

First, I can note that two of control variables, ideology and gender, are positively and statistically significantly correlated with the likelihood of endorsing American identity. On the contrary, to the expectation of social identity theory on national identity, the baseline model suggests that Korean immigrants who are more conservative are more likely to endorse American national identity. The results also indicate that particularly male immigrants are more likely identify themselves as American.

Turning to the major independent variables of interest, Table 1 shows that there is little statistical evidence that Korean immigrants who consume more Korean media are more likely to endorse American identity. Of the socioeconomic factors, the coefficients for the level of education and language proficiency appear significant, suggesting that Korean immigrants who have high levels of education and more fluently speak in English are more strongly to endorse American identity.

These results are not surprising because immigrants will assimilate in a relatively straightforward direction into the major society with increasing length of residence, as they are getting more familiar with cultural values and language in the host society [53] [54] [55]. Focusing on intergroup characteristics, a reported

Table 1. Baseline Model.

Variable	Coefficients	Robust Standard Errors
	Dependent Variable: Korean Americans' National Identity	
Media Consumption	0.006	0.186
Socioeconomic Factors		
Life in the U.S.	0.014	0.025
Education	0.192**	0.099
Income	0.047	0.097
Language Proficiency	1.650***	0.537
Intergroup Factors		
Discrimination	−0.642**	0.377
Organizational Affiliation	0.394	0.614
Control Variables		
Ideology (Strong Conservative)	0.205*	0.159
Party (Strong Republican)	0.042	0.088
Age	0.014	0.014
Gender	0.560*	0.382
Marital Status	−0.140	0.457
constant	−2.993***	1.227
N	157	
Pseudo Log-Likelihood	−91.396	
Wald Chi2	26.66***	

Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. *$p < 0.1$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$ (one-tailed test).

experience of discrimination is negatively associated with national identity, while organizational affiliation is positively correlated with national identity. However, the coefficient of the discrimination variable is significantly signed, suggesting that Korean immigrants who report an experience of direct or indirect discrimination are more likely to endorse themselves as Korean or Asian.

I turn now to the influence of the interaction between those major independent variables and the consumption of popular media on national identity, which is the finding of primary theoretical interest. Table 2 presents the results from the model that includes all multiplicative interaction terms. The coefficient for the media consumption appears insignificant which means that media consumption does not make a significant impact on the relationship between respondents' education, discrimination, and organizational affiliation and their identifying themselves as American. I think it can be partially caused by collinearity. However, it is jointly significant with the language proficiency variable and interaction term. Its positive sign indicates that when English proficiency takes on a value of 0, Korean popular media consumption is positively associated with the likelihood of having American identity. Finally, the interaction term is significant and negatively signed, suggesting that media consumption as a source

Table 2. The impact of Korean Americans' national identity on major determinants at different degrees of ethnic media consumption.

	Dependent Variable: Korean Americans' National Identity	
Variable	Coefficients	Robust Standard Errors
Media Consumption	0.424[A]	0.491
Life in the U.S.	0.013	0.068
Life in the U.S.*Media Consumption	0.002	0.021
Education	0.072	0.315
Education*Media Consumption	0.032	0.085
Income	0.346	0.359
Income*Media Consumption	−0.086	0.101
Language Proficiency	3.221**	1.819
Language Proficiency*Media Consumption	−0.502*	0.568
Discrimination	0.213	1.235
Discrimination*Media Consumption	−0.230	0.343
Organizational Affiliation	2.498	2.483
Organizational Affiliation*Media Consumption	−0.730	0.763
Ideology (Strong Conservative)	0.206	0.174
Party (Strong Republican)	0.049	0.091
Age	0.011	0.015
Gender	0.550*	0.388
Marital Status	−0.018	0.482
constant	−4.515***	2.154
N	157	
Pseudo Log-Likelihood	−89.990	
Wald Chi2	27.05**	

Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. *$p < 0.1$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$ (one-tailed test); [A]Jointly significant at $p < 0.05$.

of Korean popular culture moderates the positive impact of English proficiency on the probability of identifying themselves as American.

5. Discussion

The growing Korean popular culture has increased the consumption of the homeland media, and thereby influencing Korean immigrants to maintain their ethnic identity. Conversely, Korean immigrants who have frequently consumed Korean media as a source of getting Korean popular culture might be defensively assimilating into American culture. As a result, this study expects that the growing popularity of Korean popular culture will affect Korean immigrants to maintain Korean identity although they have been assimilated in American major society.

The model that includes multiplicative interaction terms indicates that the effect of media consumption is jointly significant with the level of language proficiency. This study finds, however, the weak statistical evidence that the Korean immigrants' media consumption throughout the increasing Korean popular culture weaken their American identity. Further, this study has not found substantial evidences that, for the most part, the exposure to Korean ethnic media moderates the positive impact of both socioeconomic and intergroup factors on American identity. These results indicate that it is unsure whether the growing Korean Wave influences Korean immigrants to maintain or to increase Korean identity in American society.

6. Conclusions

This paper has documented the impact of the exposure of Korean ethnic culture on their American identity management. As shown in the findings, there is little relationship between consuming Korean popular culture and weakening their American identity. Moreover, exposure to Korean entertainment does not curb the influential impact of both socioeconomic and intergroup factors on American identity. Thus, it concludes that even if Korean immigrants actively engaged in transnational cultural exchanges, they are still willing to maintain American identity as an important identity marker.

These findings identified in this paper suggest that the identity formation is not naturally occurring. However, one's identity work is more likely to be strategic and obviously self-conscious and calculative, in coping with in the external condition. Hence, it indicates that one's identity is not naturally or innately constructed but consciously and calculatedly constructed with some level of actor's efforts. Thus, the identity formation documented in this study suggests that these identity constructions are considered as the part of Korean immigrants' survival strategies in American society that have become the contexts of their daily lives. In other words, Korean immigrants in the U.S. are enthusiastic about reinforcing Korean ethnic identity because their ethnic identity is more outstanding with the influence of the Korean Wave, but they also realize the necessity of maintaining American identity because it is one of the major resources for survival in American society. Therefore, the data presented in this study suggest that the identity construction occurs in a strategic way of organizing Korean and American identity in one's identity structure and selective usage of identity markers in accordance with the situation. Thus, based on these findings, it is reasonable to think that these micro identity practices are organized within the dialectic interplay between structural forces and agency that deal with the changes in structural condition [32] [33] [34]. However, considering the limitations, further research can be conducted to address the following questions: 1) What are the differences in implementing identity practices between first and second or third generation Korean ethnic people in terms of the gender and age? 2) In what mechanisms they are able to form ethnic identities? If I can answer

these questions by examining Korean immigrants' experiences on identity construction, it might help to specify diverse manners in which different immigrant groups engage in ethnic identity building. In addition, my findings also contribute to reminding policy makers of considering the additional factors of cultural variations when they involve in a new policy making for media industry.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix

Selected Survey Questions for the Dependent Variable and Major Independent Variables

National Identity

People think of themselves in different ways. In general, do you think of yourself as an American, an Asian American, an Asian, a [R's ETHNIC GROUP] American, or a [R's ETHNIC GROUP]?

Media Consumption

Compared to your usage of the English media, how often do you use [R'S ETHNICGROUP'S] language media as a source of entertainment, news, and information? Would you say, all of the time, most of the time, about the same time, not very often, or not at all?

Socioeconomic Factors

How many years have you lived in the United States on a permanent basis? [ENTER RAW SCORE, ENTER 1 IF LESS THAN A YEAR]

What is the highest level of education or schooling you have completed? (READ

LIST, IF NECESSARY. RECORD ONE ANSWER.)

If you added together the yearly incomes of all the members of your family living at home last year, would the total of all their incomes be less than $20,000 ... or more than $40,000 ... or somewhere in between? [IF LESS THAN $20,000] Would the total of all their incomes be less than $10,000? [IF IN-BETWEEN] Would the total of all their incomes be less than $30,000 or more than $30,000? [IF MORE THAN $40,000] Would the total of all their incomes be between $40,000 and $60,000 ... or between $60,000 and $80,000 ... or more than that?

What language do you usually speak, when at home with family?

Intergroup Factors

Have you ever personally experienced discrimination in the Unites States?

Do you belong to any organization or take part in any activities that represent the interests and viewpoints of [R'S ETHNIC GROUP] or other Asians in America?