Branding Korea or Marketing Ethnicity?: Manhattan's Koreatown as a Transclave in the Global Economy

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BRANDING KOREA OR MARKETING ETHNICITY?:
MANHATTAN’S KOREATOWN AS A TRANSCLAVE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

by

JINWON KIM

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York
2016
Branding Korea or Marketing Ethnicity? :
Manhattan’s Koreatown as a Transclave in the Global Economy

by
Jinwon Kim

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Professor Sharon Zukin

_________________________________  ____________________________________
Date                                  Chair of Examining Committee

Professor Philip Kasinitz

_________________________________
Date                                  Executive Officer

Supervisory Committee:
Professor Richard Alba
Professor Philip Kasinitz
Professor Margaret M. Chin

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

Branding Korea or Marketing Ethnicity?:

Manhattan’s Koreatown as a Transclave in the Global Economy

by

Jinwon Kim

Advisor: Professor Sharon Zukin

Over the past decade, Koreatown in Midtown Manhattan has drawn both Koreans and non-Koreans seeking everything Korean, from day spas to nightlife; Koreatown attracts locals and tourists alike, who see the area as an exotic place to consume authentic, yet modern, Korean culture. This dissertation investigates how South Korea’s nation-branding strategy and cultural policies, together with socio-cultural and urban changes and New York City’s tourism policies, have shaped the development of Manhattan’s Koreatown into a new type of ethnic enclave, a space for “Seoul-style” consumption. The space has received intensive investment by the Korean government, cultivating it as an entertainment space as an opportunity for nation branding and promotion of Korean culture and products overseas in order to bolster the economy after the financial crisis of 1997.

New York City is one of the most critical global markets in nation-branding projects, and the landscape of Koreatown in Manhattan reflects the flow of and investment in new cultural and economic policies. Because cultural products from a sending country are often placed in traditional ethnic enclaves, the new branding policies mobilize different types of business owners
to create a new type of ethnic space, which I call a “transclave.” In this dissertation, I define “transclave” as a commercialized ethnic space that exists exclusively for consumption, leisure, and entertainment; it is a space where transnational consumer culture from a sending country is embedded within a physical space in a receiving society, reflecting the landscape of the sending country’s consumer culture through the physical appearance of buildings and stores, and the inclusion of franchise brands. It becomes a cultural platform for the Korean government and relatively small Korean corporations to market the nation and its brands for both economic and political benefits.

This dissertation is based on multi-layered research based on archival research, participant observation, and in-depth interviews with 111 individuals, including three consumer groups (Korean nationals, Korean Americans and non-Koreans), business owners, and officials working in Korean organizations in both Seoul and New York City. This dissertation begins with an historical analysis of nation branding in South Korea in the post-1997-financial-crisis era and Korea’s branding policies’ influence on Manhattan’s Koreatown, coupled with the role of transnational entrepreneurs as cultural transmitters. I highlight how and why these policies encouraged different types of business owners to create a consumer-based transclave.

I also analyze transnationalism from below by looking at the consumer patterns of various groups, including Korean nationals, Korean Americans, and non-Koreans. Korean nationals’ interaction in and use of Koreatown reflects a form of public diplomacy, a way of creating positive images of the nation and introducing contemporary Korean culture, such as Korean pop culture and food and entertainment, to New York’s consumption scene. Yet Korean Americans’ ethnic consumption in Koreatown is mainly symbolic; it is an effective tool with which they build both a transnational cultural identity through cultural products, and a sense of
belonging through cultural consumption and entertainment, a practice previously limited to the private realm of the home and family. For non-Koreans who have never traveled to Korea, Koreatown is a local place where Korean culture and food are easily accessed for consumption; the growing popularity of Korean food and culture among this group highlights individuals’ responses to the globalization of ethnic food and contextualizing of the growing popularity of Korean food within a move from snobbishness to omnivorousness; non-Koreans increasingly approach Korean culture, and food in particular, with curiosity rather than up-turned noses, a result of an outgrowth of ethnic revival and consumerism that markets ethnicity in the U.S.
Acknowledgements

I indebted to many people both in New York and South Korea who helped me in my journey to completing my dissertation. Since I began working on my Ph.D. in 2007, I have had the chance to meet and work with countless smart, innovative and inspiring individuals and learned so much from each of them.

To begin, my deepest gratitude goes to my wonderfully supportive academic advisor and mentor, Sharon Zukin. My dissertation began as a class project in her urban sociology seminar early on in my career as a Ph.D. student, and she has worked with me, providing critically constructive feedback ever since. Sharon, a great writer, has always challenged me to develop my critical theories and analysis. Whenever I thought that I was done with a piece of writing, Sharon challenged me to push beyond my boundaries. She has truly been an intellectual asset to me in this process. I also thank my additional committee members, Richard Alba, Philp Kasinitz and Margaret Chin, for carefully reading my manuscript and giving me thorough and productive comments.

At the Graduate Center I was lucky to have the support from fellow classmates in sociology and other disciplines. The Graduate Center Immigration Working Group not only provided feedback on my work, but also a sense of community to which I feel attached. The Graduate Center was where I met dear friends, including Bernadette Ludwig, Elizabeth Miller, Jennifer Sloan and Jessica Sperling (in an alphabetical order, of course!), among many others. We took classes together, organized students-led conferences, and shared in our mutual intellectual pursuits. Our relationships go beyond just fellowship because we understood our struggles as simultaneous graduate students and college instructors. Thank you my friends who were there for me whenever I felt lost, sad, or discouraged, and who pushed (and at times nagged) me to keep up on my work so I could finish my degree.

The Graduate Center also gave me a community of Korean friends and mentors. I particularly thank Hosu Kim, Meebae Lee and Jung Joon Lee. Despite our differences in age and disciplines, they, now all college professors in the U.S. and Korea, always provided support for me as a fellow foreign Asian woman in American academia. I feel fortunate to have found people who could play the role of “peer mentor” as I navigated the emotional and bureaucratic complexity of higher education in the United States. They always remind me that I should not just focus on finishing my degree, but should also take the time for deep reflection in my research and writing. Writing a dissertation in my second language was not an easy task, and I had many people who helped me go through this process. My editors, Rebekka Gold and Elizabeth Miller, carefully read my manuscripts and gave me productive comments. Rebekka, who worked with me for five years, always provided comments that went beyond editorial suggestions. We talked a lot about
framing, writing style, and other approaches to improve my manuscripts. Elizabeth was skilled at providing a quick turnaround for red-pen edits whenever I need something done in a crunch. I was also lucky to have a supportive writing group while I wrote my dissertation, organized by my advisor Sharon. Thank you, Jacob Lederman, Aneta Kostrzewska and Fang Xu, for all of your critical and productive feedback that challenged my own perspective. It was a long and, at times, tiresome journey, but we each accomplished our goal.

I must also thank friends, acquaintances, fellow graduate students, professors, and other colleagues that I met in schools or other professional settings. Hyelin and Jeong-yoon, you are the best for being there whenever I needed to talk, even if you didn’t always understand the unique challenges that academia poses to graduate students. I am indebted to my Korean sociologist friends who would remind me why I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in the first place. I also want to show my deep appreciation for colleagues and mentors who I met at the SSRC Korean studies dissertation workshop in 2014 for giving me productive feedback. The program and its participants were truly intellectually inspiring.

As I wrote in my methodological notes, this project could not have been completed without the people who participated in my research. I want to show my deepest appreciation to the 111 individuals who provided me their time for interviews, and shared their thoughts, visions, and struggles with me. I will always remember each person and their generosity. I also thank my Korean-American friends and students who I met by teaching Korean-language classes in a non-profit organization in New York in 2008; they introduced me to Asian-American Studies and politicizing me in eyes of Asian Americans. They transformed how I see society and myself. The last but not the least, many thanks go to my parents, younger brother, and grandmother. Mom and dad, you were always there regardless of how well my work was going. Thank you so much for believing in me. My grandmother, who migrated from the North to the South during the Korean War, passed away while I was writing my dissertation. She was in South Korea without her family, and her husband, my grandfather, had passed away in the late 1980s. I’m sorry, grandma, that I couldn’t be with you in your last days of life. Her passing made me think of her life in the context of Korean history in a way that I had never really thought before, and my mourning became rooted in memories of the food that she fed me when I was very young. Little did I know that my grandmother’s death would provide such an emotional connection to my research for me. Thank you, grandma. I believe that you are now surrounded by your family members from whom you had been separated by politics, war, and propaganda for more than 60 years. I thus want to dedicate my dissertation to my parents and grandma.
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List of Abbreviations

CGROKNY: Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York
CNII: the Committee on Nation Image Improvement
EUSKCGC: Eastern United States Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee
GIA: Government Information Agency
IIPS: Institute for Industrial Policy Studies
KAFFTC: Korea Agro-Fisheries and Food Trade Corporation
KCCA: Korea Creative Content Agency
KCS: Korean Cultural Service
KFF: The Korea Food Foundation
KIS: the Korean Information Service
KOTRA: Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency
KOICA: Korea International Cooperation Agency
KTO: Korean Tourism Organization
MAFRA: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
MCIE: Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy
MCT: Ministry of Culture and Tourism
MFA: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFAFF: Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MKE: The Ministry of Knowledge Economy
OKF: Overseas Korean Foundation
Chapter 1

Introduction:

'Theorizing the Transclave in a Global City

This dissertation investigates how South Korea’s nation-branding strategy and cultural policies, together with socio-cultural and urban changes and New York City tourism policies, have shaped the development of Manhattan’s Koreatown into a new type of ethnic enclave, a space for “Seoul-style” consumption. Koreatown attracts locals and tourists who see the area as an exotic place where authentic, yet modern, Korean consumer culture. Over the past decade, the neighborhood, in Midtown Manhattan, has drawn both Koreans and non-Koreans seeking everything Korean, from day spas to nightlife. The space also has received intensive investment by the Korean government, as it has helped cultivate it as an entertainment space and opportunity for nation branding and promoting Korean culture and products.

South Korea’s cultural policies demonstrate the growing importance of nations’ “soft-power” (Nye 2005; Centeno, Bandelj and Wherry 2011) in the current era of global competition. South Korea has actively participated in new global trends by adapting national cultural products for overseas consumers and consumer culture. The financial crisis of 1997 was a critical moment for the South Korean government, as new economic and socio-cultural policies were introduced to overcome financial uncertainties. In this dissertation, I argue that the government, rather than stepping in as the main actor, took the role of facilitator for the new global order in implementing IMF policies. I focus particularly on nation branding projects, which were targeted for national investment to overcome the financial crisis through marketing strategies. I contextualize the
nation’s strategy of promoting certain industries within global economic restructuring and political changes; soft power becomes a marketing tool for the nation and reinforces the idea that of the nation can a brand that targets a wider audience.

New York City is one of the most critical global markets in nation-branding projects, and the landscape of Koreatown in Manhattan reflects the flow of and investment in new cultural and economic policies. Because cultural products from a sending country are often placed in traditional ethnic enclaves, the new branding policies mobilize different types of business owners to create a new type of ethnic space, which I call a “transclave.” In this dissertation, I define “transclave” as a commercialized ethnic space that exists exclusively for consumption, leisure, and entertainment; it is a space where transnational consumer culture from a sending country is embedded within a physical space in a receiving society, reflecting the landscape of the sending country’s consumer culture through the physical appearance of buildings and stores, and the inclusion of franchise brands. Unlike traditional ethnic enclaves, Manhattan's Koreatown has never provided living space for newer immigrants; rather, the space offers a variety of leisure consumption experiences. It therefore becomes a cultural platform for the Korean government and relatively small Korean corporations to market the nation and its brands for both economic and political benefits.

As a “transclave,” Koreatown serves as an intersection at which Korea’s political, economic, social, and cultural influences meet New York City’s diverse cultural mosaic. As with the traditional ethnic enclave, ethnicity enters the marketplace to become commodified in a small section of New York City. Koreatown, a one-square block area centered around 32nd Street between 5th Avenue and Broadway, consists of six-to-ten-story office buildings, as well as a
handful of manufacturing buildings left over from the area’s history as a garment district. This small block, however, has unique traits that differentiate it from other ethnic enclaves, particularly the typical Chinatown model. First and foremost, Koreatown exists only for consumption and has never served any residential purpose. Koreatown is zoned as a medium-to-high-density commercial district by the New York City Department of City Planning, which allows Koreatown to be open for business at all hours. Furthermore, investors in Koreatown tend to open restaurants and bars not only on the first floor of buildings, but also on the second, third, and fourth floors; this is a common practice in Seoul, but atypical of New York City business spaces. As such, Manhattan's Koreatown has a higher concentration of stores than do other consumption spaces in New York City, which endows the space with a plethora of shopping, eating and entertainment opportunities.
In this dissertation, I locate Koreatown in two dimensions. As shown in Figure 1, I analyze transnational flows of people, industries and culture between Korea and the U.S., particularly highlighting recent changes in transnational flows of culture and people from South Korea post-1997 financial crisis: 1) a new migration trend for Koreans in New York City, from permanent immigration to transnational migration, with an increasing number of temporary residents; 2) a rise in South Korea’s nation branding efforts overseas; and 3) increasing financial investment in South Korea by overseas Koreans. Beyond these flows, I also highlight structural changes in both societies, with particular attention to the process of economic, political and cultural development of South Korea, which I divide into three stages: nation building, transition and nation branding. To analyze how transnational flows are embedded in this small area of New York, it is important to note that it went from playing host to initial post-1965 Korean
immigrants’ peddling operations to its current inception in three stages: traditional wholesale commercial ethnic enclave to transition, and, finally, transclave.

**Figure 2. Transnationalism in Manhattan’s Koreatown**

As a transclave, Manhattan’s Koreatown is also a space of cultural significance constructed by both consumers and producers—temporary Korean migrants, Korean Americans, non-Koreans, Korean entrepreneurs and the Korean government. In this dissertation, as shown in Figure 1-2, I identify both macro and micro aspects of transnational activities: transnationalism from above and from below. In the analysis of transnationalism from above, particular attention is paid to the South Korean government’s top-down policy as it has affected the emergence of Korean pop culture and food in New York City. I locate the current Nation Branding projects into historical context and analyze the top-down government policy on the formation of Koreatown as a transclave, an ethnic space for consumption and entertainment.
Rather than focus solely on the role of government and corporations in nation branding projects – an approach used in many other studies and professional groups, such as communication strategists, journalists and academics (Aronczyk 2013) – I also analyze transnationalism from below by paying attention to various consumer groups: Korean nationals, Korean Americans, and non-Koreans. Far from passive consumers or subjects of nation branding projects, I argue that these diverse actors create and recreate the transclave's spatial meanings from the bottom up. These ideas will be explored through participant observation and in-depth interviews of 111 individuals, including customers with diverse ethnic backgrounds, business owners, and officials working in Korea-related organizations in both Seoul and New York City.

**Landscape of Koreatown**

One solitary block of Manhattan's West 32nd Street, between Broadway and Fifth Avenue is officially called Korea Way, and nicknamed Koreatown. Extending to some parts of 35th Street, Sixth Avenue, and Park Avenue, at first glance this space appears to be an ethnic enclave, presented largely by Koreans—younger Korean and Korean American consumers and Korean-owned businesses of non-Korean customers and Hispanic workers. As with other ethnic enclaves of New York City, where members of an ethnic group share their unique culture, values, beliefs, and lifestyles, Koreatown also contains a cluster of homeland-style businesses such as Korean restaurants, bars with Korean-style food, a food court, Korean franchise bakery-cafes, Korean-brand cosmetic stores, Korean hair salons, and noraebang (karaoke bars) represents Korean ethnic identity via shared lifestyle and consumer culture.
Koreatown buildings provide spaces for consumption; moreover, a wide variety of other producer service agencies and offices in the transclave serve Korean customers: insurance, Korean banks, lawyers, Korean newspapers, real estate, accountants, travel agencies, dental clinics, and doctor’s offices. The Jewish wholesalers who previously dominated the garment district from the 1920s to the 1960s (Lin 2011) remain present in diminished numbers, and there are some Indian and Chinese establishments. However, the Korean presence steadily grows. According to the Koreatimes, a local ethnic newspaper, in 2007, ten of 21 buildings on 32nd street were owned by Korean immigrants, eight by Jewish Americans, two by Indian Americans, and one by an Italian American (Kim 2007); by 2014, Koreans had bought two more buildings (Kim 2014), strengthening the nature of this block as a predominantly Korean ethnic commercial area.
As an ethnic transclave, this is a space where a non-Western culture has become embedded within a Western urban context. Koreatown was initially formed as a traditional ethnic enclave in order to serve Korean immigrants working in the Korean Business District (24th to 34th Streets between Fifth and Sixth Avenues). Aside from a few Korean restaurants, the space was largely devoid of cultural products beyond a small number of restaurants until the 1980s.¹ Yet in the very short time since the early 2000s Koreatown has become a hip and cool space where Koreans can consume their own culture, and where non-Koreans can consume “exotic” Asian culture, ranging from traditional cuisine to contemporary nightlife. Notably, growing numbers of Korean franchises from South Korea have invested into Koreatown by opening up outlets or flagship stores, while older restaurants associated with immigrants have closed down or been placed on the market.² These outlets range from bakeries to cosmetic stores: there are two Korean cosmetic stores (the Faceshop and Tony Moly), two bakery-café franchises (Paris Baguette and Tous Les Jours), a coffee shop (Café Bene), a ginseng shop and café (G-cafe), a frozen yogurt and ice-cream shop (Red Mango), two BBQ franchises (Jongro BBQ and Kang Ho

¹ In his book *Caught in the Middle: Korean Communities in New York and Los Angeles* (1996), Min defines the Korean Business District as a rectangular area from 24th to 34th Streets between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Yet in the chapter “Koreans: Changes in New York in the Twenty-First Century (2013),” he redefines it as 27th Street to 35th Street on Broadway, Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Min broadly defines the district as including all sorts of Korean business, such as wholesale and Koreatown (known as K-town) businesses. However, I argue that the wholesale sector and Koreatown businesses should be categorized separately, because 1) characteristics of their businesses are different; 2) wholesale businesses represent old Koreatown, as discussed at Chapter 4, while Koreatown businesses represent new Koreatown (as analyzed at Chapter 3); and 3) two sections do not interact with each other. The Koreatown business section, in fact, has its own Business Improvement Association, established in 2009.

² The oldest three restaurants were closed down or planning to close down. Woo Chon on 35th Street (opened 1981) and New York Gomtang (opened 1979) on 32nd Street closed in 2011 and 2013 respectively, while Kangsuh on 32nd Street (opened 1984) filed an application for bankruptcy protection in 2014, although the restaurant is currently in business.
Dong Baekjeong), and two fried chicken franchises (Kyochon and Bonchon) as of May 2015. This new trend has intensified the direct influence of Korean business and consumer culture on Koreatown, reconstructing the space as increasingly and visibly transnational.

However, their growing presence was controversial. Korean nationals welcome the growing number of Korean franchises, believing that these businesses bring Korea’s “modernized” consumer culture to New York City more accurately than any immigrant-owned stores; the stigma of immigrants stuck in the time they left Korea is particularly galling to these Korean nationals, as discussed in Chapter 5. Yet Korean ethnic media and Koreatown entrepreneurs have expressed concern that bigger corporations from South Korea\(^3\) are threatening smaller businesses already established in the space.

**Koreatown as an NYC tourist attraction**

The impact of the transnational investment has changed and (re)shaped Koreatown, and midtown Manhattan itself, over time. As shown at Chapter 3, Korean businesses successfully settled down on Broadway and later on 32\(^{nd}\) Street in midtown Manhattan because of cheap rent (Lin 2011). The Radisson Martinique Hotel on Broadway and 32\(^{nd}\) Street, one of the city’s most notorious welfare hotels that served an emergency shelter for homeless families in the ‘70s and ‘80s, dissuaded entrepreneurs from investing in the area until it closed in 1989 (Chapter 3).

---

\(^3\) However, bigger corporations should be understood differently. As discussed in Part 1 (Chapters 3 and 4), these Korean corporations are relatively small or medium size in relation to the major corporations of Korea; those larger entities, such as Samsung, Hyundai and LG, do not directly invest into Koreatown, or strategically disassociate their brands from the image of the nation (Chapters 2 and 3). Yet corporations that recently opened franchise and flagship stores, such as Paris Baguette and Tous Les Jours, are well-recognized and sometimes dominate their particular market share in South Korea.
Despite the convenient midtown location, the dead zone created by the Radisson Martinique and the solely-business wholesale district did not seem welcoming to non-Korean New Yorkers or tourists. Yet a few decades later, Koreatown is considered a tourist attraction in its own right, following the city-wide post-9/11 tourism boom.

Mayor Bloomberg’s plan to rebrand New York City to attract domestic and foreign investments as well as to boost tourism (Greenberg 2009; Brash 2011) played a part in increasing tourist visits to New York. Moreover, Koreatown in Manhattan, unlike those in Flushing and New Jersey, is heavily impacted by tourism trends in New York City, as shown in my interviews with Koreatown entrepreneurs in Chapters 3 and 4. One of the reasons that Manhattan’s Koreatown has gotten popular is “its central location and densely packed restaurants, bars, karaoke clubs, and spas (Galante 2011).” The 24/7 atmosphere and entertainment and nightlife opportunities – “a concentration of karaoke clubs where you can belt out favorites until 4 a.m., as well as a spa open to couples from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m.” (Rexroat 2014) – enhances the allure. Koreatown is walking distance from tourist attractions such as the Empire State Building, the Highline park, Chelsea Market, the theater district, Times Square, Bryant Park and the main branch of the New York Public Library; the three primary transportation hubs (Penn Station, Grand Central Terminal, and Port Authority Bus Terminal); and the 34th Street shopping district. It now easily attracts not only regular New Yorkers but also domestic and international visitors to New York City.

The growing popularity of NoMad (North of Madison Square Park), a rectangular area from 23rd to 30th Streets between Lexington Avenue and Avenue of the Americas, also seems to support Koreatown’s growth. NoMad’s urban identity is not defined by its residents, but rather
“by its nonresidents; specifically, its hotels (Sternbergh 2010).” New boutique hotel constructions, the Ace hotel, the NoMad, the MAve, the Carlton, the Hotel Roger Williams, and the Gershwin, have all brought with them opportunities for bars, restaurants, and boutique retailers in the area.

**Table 1. Number of hotels opening from 2012- in New York City**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Manhattan</th>
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<th>Bronx</th>
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<td>Hotels in 2015 Pipeline</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>123</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: NYC & Company

** This report was released on February, 2015; NYC & Company includes hotels that opened before February. Those planning later openings are listed under “Hotels in 2015 Pipeline.”

**Table 2. Hotels in Manhattan and near Koreatown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>total</th>
<th>Manhattan</th>
<th>Other boroughs</th>
<th>Near Koreatown*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 **</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels in 2016 Pipeline</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on a list of hotel addresses offered by NYC & Company.

** 2015 data includes three hotels opened as of February 26th (all in Manhattan) and those in the pipeline for 2015.

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*** I limited my search near Koreatown location, using Google Maps, to the walkable rectangular area from 23rd and 42nd Streets between Park and 8th Avenues.

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, more new hotels are being built in New York City every year. New hotel construction remains concentrated in Manhattan, as 69.1% of hotels constructed since 2012 are or will be in Manhattan. Many of these new hotels are located in the vicinity of Koreatown. By limiting the hotels within a rectangular area from 23rd Street and 42nd Street between Park Avenue and 8th Avenue, based on their addresses offered by NYC & Company, as shown in Table 2, the trend still seems to be obvious, albeit limited numbers. Urban changes in New York as a whole, and the adjacent neighborhoods in Midtown in particular, has reshaped Koreatown, moving it from a traditional ethnic enclave to a transclave, increasing the number of tourists and locals who specifically seek out Seoul-style leisure and everyday consumption.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Nation branding in transnational flows**

Globalization has transformed many realms of modern society: economic (economic internationalization and the spread of the Western-style market economy), social (the emergence of world society), cultural (the development of new global communication, cultural hybridity, and cultural standardization), and political realms (the increasing density of inter-state relations, the trend toward multilateralism, and growth of global politics and global justice movements) (Pieterse 1994; Kong 1999). In this globalized world, as Giddens argues, distant localities are connected and “shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” due to the “intensification of worldwide social relations (Giddens 1990:64).” Some scholars further argue
that globalization enhances the processes through which people are incorporated into a single world society.

Economic changes in particular have caught scholars’ attention, as the global economy moves rapidly in the direction of a new international division of labor--outsourcing and offshoring (Feenstra and Gordon 1996; Sassen 2001; Olsen 2006), international fragmentation (Arndt and Kierzkowski 2001; Jones and Marjit 2001), financialization (Porter 1986; Helleiner 1996; Aglietta 2000; Epstein 2005; Krippner 2005; Foster 2007), neo-liberalism (Helleiner 1994, 1996; Harvey 2005), and a flexible and decentralized economic system (Hall 1966; Friedmann 1986; Scott 1988; Harvey 1989; Sassen 2001; Storper 1996; Castells 2000; Marcuse and van Kempen 2000). In this sense, globalization often is associated with integration, incorporation and unilateral processes, as the world becomes more uniform and standardized.

In the new global economic order, goods and services are produced and marketed by global megacorporations, crossing national borders (Knox 1995). Many scholars argue that the role of nation-states is accordingly being weakened, as it is both loosened and constrained by global capital, global political institutions, and global culture (Frieden 1991; Ohmae 1995; Guehenno 1995; Gereffi 1996; Cox 1997). Others argue that local or national cultures and social forces remain viable, as seen in glocalization and regionalization arguments (Robertson 1995; Smith 2001; Brenner 2004; Cowen 2004; Holton 2005).

Yet as Smith argues, these globalists often treat globalization and nation-state as mutually exclusive (Smith 2001). I argue that the nation-state remains relevant in and even facilitates the process of global change (Evans 1997; Mann 1997; Garrett 1998; Weiss 1998). Global processes and institutional arrangements materialize in national territories; likewise, financial markets and
transnational corporations are anchored within national territories (Kearney 1995; Mann 1997; Smith 2001).

While several factors overlap with globalization, the term ‘transnationalism’ uniquely captures the role of the “nation” or “nation-state” in globalization processes; while such processes take place through their detachment from and decentering of national territories, transnational processes occur “within one or more nations and transcend one or more nation-states” (Kearney 1995:p548; Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Mann 1997). Nation-states also foster “transnational reincorporation of migrants into their state-centered projects (Guarnizo and M.P. Smith 1998: p7).

Scholars in transnational studies also emphasize the meaning of “the local” --from the bottom--up in a globalized society. Transnational activities from above--on the part of transnational capital, finance, trade, global media and culture, supra-national political institutions and local or national governments as facilitators of global and transnational processes--largely control and dominate the everyday lives of citizens. These are macro-level structures; yet bottom-up participation--by migrants and their children with compound identities, by marginalized others through border-crossing, and by transnational entrepreneurs--must be underscored (Kearney 1991, 1995; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Glick Schiller et al. 1994, 1995; M.P. Smith 1994, 1998; Portes 1996; Levitt 2001; Vertovec 2004). These immigrants, what Glick Schiller et al. call “transmigrants,” establish social fields crossing geographic, cultural and political borders; such citizens are spread out geopolitically, maintaining social, political and cultural ties to their homeland despite not being “physically” anchored within national boundaries (Glick Schiller et al. 1994, 1995, 2005; Portes 1996; Smith 1994; Levitt and Glick
Schiller 2004). In this sense, Glick Schiller et al. argue that “transmigrants” construct “deterritorialized nation-states,” while political and economic entities in nation-states redefine their diaspora as a global resource (Glick Schiller 1995).

Nation branding strategies, a new trend in transnationalism from above, in which nation-states, often collaborating with corporations and transnational corporations, reshape and redefine the meanings and images of the nation to promote its revenue. As Sklair argues and explains in a term, “emergent global nationalism,” nation or nation-state’s interests are best served “if it can find a lucrative set of roles within the ever-expanding global capitalist system (Sklair 2001:137).” In this sense, nation-states are inseparable from global changes.

Nation branding is a significant economic strategy of the 21st century that nation-states develop to improve their competitive position in a global economy. ‘Brand’ generally refers to the “name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition,” as defined by the American Marketing Association (American Marketing Association 1960, cited in Dinne 2008). Brands thus initially represent the producers’ perspective rather than the consumers’ (Macrae, Parkison and Sheerman 1995; Holt 2004; de Chernatony 2008). Yet a brand is not static, but evolves through the stories it generates. Consumers value some products more than others, and find them valuable in their construction of an identity which distinguishes the self of the individual consumer from others; this is an economically-based method of self-identification (Holt 2004). As Douglas Holt argues, in this process successful brands become iconic through interaction with their consumers and environments (Holt 2004:p3-4).
In the past few decades, this sort of branding, along with related business strategies such as risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation (Hall and Hubbard 1998), have been adopted and promoted by various political entities, e.g. city governments and nation-states, to reinforce nations and cities as tourist destinations (Fan 2006) and capital investments (Kavaratzis 2004). Such public-private partnerships increasingly play a strong role in the realms of public policy and legislation as 'place branding' (Greenberg 2009; Aronczyk 2013). For instance, New York City’s I ♥ New York campaign was part of a marketing-driven recovery effort aimed at transforming the city’s image post-White Flight and 1970s fiscal crisis; post 9/11, the Bloomberg administration’s economic policies and urban branding strategies followed the same path (Greenberg 2009).

Likewise, Some experts have convinced national governments that they too can develop a brand. A national brand, “the reputation of countries and cities like the brand images of companies” as defined by marketing guru Simon Anholt, has financial impact when it leads to the rest of the world contributing to the nation’s revenue (Anholt 1998, 2010, 2011; Aronczyk 2013). Place branding and place marketing go back in the early ‘90s (Szondi 2008). Anholt argues that in a globalized world, countries try to “pull in investors, aid, tourists, business investors, students, major events, researchers, travel writers and talented entrepreneurs,” and simultaneously “push out products, service, policies, culture and ideas (Anholt 2011:p22).” The clichés and stereotypes of countries or cities and their qualities (e.g. Parisian stylishness, Swiss wealth and precision, Japanese technological expertise) fundamentally affect people’s opinions and behavior towards these places, people and products (Anholt 2011). Brands build on with the nation’s image, such as in consumer association of Switzerland with chocolates and watches,
France with fashion, and Japan with electronics (Anholt 1998, 2010, 2011; O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2000). Some transnational megacorporations maintain their brand by reinforcing connotations with their countries of origin: Benz from Germany, Sony and Toyota from Japan, Apple, Starbucks and McDonalds from the U.S.

Nation branding and similar fields like public diplomacy have related goals but move in different directions. Where nation branding has been researched by marketing and business scholars, public diplomacy has been emphasized by scholars of international relations and communication (Dinne 2008; Gilboa 2007). Both fields emerged to satisfy nation-states and transnational corporations in the 1990s, when nation-states had to position themselves in the new post-Cold War geopolitical and global economic order: by designing new policies and strategies to attract alliances; and at the same time pursuing neo-liberal privatization and trade promotion (Jansen 2008). As nation branding is “aimed at reconstituting nationhood through marketing and branding paradigms (Kaneva 2011),” the nation itself is now included in the realm of the business paradigm. In particular, in the process of nation branding projects, cultural symbols become part of a story of the nation (e.g. people, destinations, history, celebrities, culture, food, fashion, cultural industry and brands) and the national experience that tourists and others can consume.

Drawing from the marketing strategies of private enterprise, some governments strive to create an international image that will promote positive international associations with the national brand, as well as achieve competitiveness in the global market (Olins 2002; Gudjonsson 2005; Kotler and Keller 2011; Fan 2006, 2010; Dinne and Fola 2009). In this way, nation branding is a form of “soft power,” which co-opts and attracts people through the nation’s
cultural assets rather than threatens them with military weapons (Nye 2005; Centeno, Bandelj, and Wherry 2011; Aronczyk 2008; 2013). In a post-industrial world, a nation’s influence over other nations is exerted not just through military and economic power; with the emergence of non-state actors and two-way communication patterns between states (Melissen 2005), states and non-state actors interact with one another (Gilboa 2008) to enact soft power, exerted through cultural industries such as film and television which allow a nation to express and promote itself and its self-image (Vedrine and Moisi 2001; Nye 2005; Dinnie et al. 2010).

Nation branding can regenerate a nation’s image through such marketing and branding devices as logos and slogans. For instance, “Cool Britannia,” a slogan adopted by Britain’s Labour Party in 1997, was designed to promote London’s cultural renaissance as a fashion hub (Aronczyk 2008; 2013), albeit with some sarcastic criticism of the concept as superficial (Freely 1998; Wired 1998; Jansen 2008). Another example is Estonia, the first former Soviet state to launch a branding campaign in an effort to change its image from “post-Soviet” to “pre-EU;” this self-definition, reflecting radical economic and political reform, repositioned the national identity in part through association with the global economy (Gilboa 2008; Jansen 2008). Other nations, such as Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Finland, Germany, India, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, and New Zealand have also participated in this trend (Jansen 2008; Kaneva and Popescu 2011).
As shown in Figure 4, governments and marketing professionals develop visual images to represent nations through the use of logos, slogans, and symbols. This kind of nation branding is highly visible, and rooted in mainstream media. Nation branders must prove and assure “domestic elites, stakeholders and the public that their government is acting in their best interests (Aronczyk 2008: p44).”

Public diplomacy, the quintessential form of soft power (Anholt 1998; Dinnie et al. 2010), is increasingly enacted through government councils and committees; these include the United Kingdom’s Public Diplomacy Board, the International Marketing Council of South Africa, Switzerland’s Presence Switzerland, and South Korea’s Presidential Council on Nation Branding (Fetscherin and Marmier 2010; Anholt 2011; Kaneva 2011). These nation branding councils and committees often collaborate with marketing firms: for example, Brand Estonia, hired Interbrand, a British communication firm, and developed in New York (Jansen 2008).
Likewise, international tourist offices and cultural centers are government-sponsored strategies promoting the nation as a brand by commodifying itself overseas.

However, much research on nation branding highlights the role of elites or experts, such as consultants, scholars, and government officials who create, legitimize, and reproduce the meaning of the nation from above, what Aronczyk--drawing from Leslie Sklair’s transnational capitalist class (TCC)--calls “a transnational promotional class (TPC)” (Aronczyk 2013:39). Less attention has been given to the bottom-up participants, those ordinary citizens necessary to reinforce that meaning in a globalized world. Whether overseas or interacting with foreigners within their nation, these participants' understanding of the nation is magnified through their relocation and re-situation of themselves within a new global order (Aronczyk 2013).

This dissertation addresses the role of national citizens as bottom-up participants in nation branding projects, who transmit their contemporary culture to non-coethnic associates. I also analyze the role of transnational entrepreneurs in Koreatown; however, unlike Aronczyk’s “group of experts who propose to improve the nation’s culture and identity by bringing it into alignment with the exigencies of global realities” (Aronczyk 2013: p38), I see these transnational entrepreneurs as cultural transmitters who connect the Korean government's top-down policies to bottom-up participation in Koreatown, whether visibly or not. I pay particular attention to how Korean citizens and members of the Korean diaspora perceive and respond to Koreatown entrepreneurs’ business strategies, by utilizing the space as both a site and a tool to project their own “national” and consumer identities and introduce “their” culture to others. In addition to these ethnic Koreans, I also consider how non-Koreans respond to South Korean government’s soft-power policies and the nation’s images, in their consumption of cultural products and
Koreatown. In this way, these bottom-up participants, whether intentionally or not, play a role in the nation branding projects to shape and reshape the meaning of the nation and its culture and brand.

Ethnicity and the Marketplace

In the 1960s, scholars observed an ethnic revival in the U.S.; ethnic awareness, or what Steinberg (1981) disparagingly calls “ethnic fever,” was embraced by various minority communities, fueled first by Black Americans and rapidly extending to Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans and Asians, and various white ethnics who had already assimilated into the U.S. mainstream to an extent (including Irish, Italians, Ashkenazi Jews, and others of European descent) (Steinberg 1981; Omi and Winant 1994). Earlier groups, especially these white ethnic immigrants, were generally assimilationist; as a result, sociologists tended to expect that all groups would seek to downplay and eventually erase their distinctive characteristics through assimilation and acculturation. Yet the Civil Rights movement beginning in the late ’50s, and especially newer ethnic social movements emerging in its wake, emphasized differences, in part due to the impossibility of non-white groups assimilating into whiteness; at the same time, the Immigration Act of 1965 profoundly diversified the U.S. population (Alba and Nee 2009). As a result, the U.S. racial and ethnic mosaics were institutionally transformed from the ideal of the melting pot to a pluralist and later multicultural society. Ethnicity was traditionally associated with lifestyles of the lower and working classes (Gans 1979), and represented immigrants’ nostalgia for the old nation; now, paradoxically, it came to represent novel, cool, and cosmopolitan cultures, as anchored in a cold and impersonal marketplace (Halter 2007).
From Melting Pot to Pluralism

In the first half of the 20th century, Chicago School scholars such as Park, Burgess, Wirth, and later Warner and Srole pioneered ideas of race and ethnicity in the field of sociology. Where earlier sociologists devoted themselves to analyzing the social change from feudalism to capitalism both in the U.S. and Europe, these scholars began to pay attention to racial and ethnic minority groups in American cities. Their understanding of race and ethnicity in the U.S. context was also a paradigm shift from the biological approaches that highlighted the relative superiority and inferiority of racial groups based on physical traits, as seen in social Darwinist approach. The main themes of this new discourse on race and ethnicity, and the understanding of diverse group dynamics, were assimilation and cultural pluralism (Omi and Winant 1994; Alba and Nee 2009).

Robert Park understood assimilation as the last stage in the theory of the race relations cycle: contact, conflict, accommodation, assimilation. He believed that an ethnic group's distinctive cultural traits would eventually diminish (Park 1921), while Louis Wirth (Wirth 1928) viewed the modern Chinese, Black, Sicilian, and Jewish ghettos as a socio-psychological and ecological phenomenon, the residence of the poorest and most isolated immigrants (Wirth 1928). Likewise, Warner and Srole (1945), documenting the decline of white ethnic enclaves as American-born generations moved from the working class to higher classes in New England, used straight-line assimilation theory to argue that ethnic groups must unlearn their ethnic culture in order to learn a new one, and to incorporate into the host society. Even as such analyses broke

\[5\] Park and Burgess defined assimilation as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history are incorporated with them in a common cultural life (Park and Burgess 1921: p735; cited in Gordon’s Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins, 1964:p62).”
away from the biological perspectives, the customs of U.S. White Anglo-Saxon Protestants were automatically considered dominant. In the Chicago School tradition, if conflicting racial and ethnic dynamics still existed, they should be viewed as “the irrational products of individual pathologies (Omi and Winant 1994: p10).”

Later, pluralists noted that there were various paths to assimilation for ethnic minorities. Gordon (1964) developed a theory of assimilation by suggesting stages of what he ultimately considered “the ideal-typical model” (p70; p126); this model involves cultural or behavioral assimilation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation, identificational assimilation, attitude receptional assimilation, behavior receptional assimilation, and civic assimilation (p71). Gordon also argued that the “single melting pot” theory, typically overlapping with conformity to the WASP model, was an illusion (p129); although agreeing that ethnic groups learn to adopt Anglo-Saxon patterns to a lesser or greater, it is hard to consider this as occurring “structurally” among white Catholics (Irish, Italians and Poles) and racial minority groups. In particular, racial minority groups are prevented by racial discrimination from participating in either the white Protestant or the white Catholic communities (p129); and the racial/ethnic minorities do not always accept melting pot agendas. As a result, American society has consisted of a number of “pots” or “subsocieties.” Likewise, Glazer and Moynihan (1963), examining five ethnic groups in New York City—Black Americans, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish—found that diverse ethnic groups would be incorporated into American society, but to different degrees, because the assimilating power operated in different ways on different groups, especially

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6 Structural assimilation is the key. Once structural assimilation has occurred, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow. The price of such assimilation is the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values (p81).
immigrants. This brought the argument that ethnicity steadily declines among Ashkenazi Jews, Italians and Irish, while the ethnicity of Black Americans and Puerto Ricans remained salient because of the legacy of slavery and colonialism. They considered this, however, within the frame of intra-cultural values, e.g. weak family ties among Black Americans and transnational habits within the Puerto Rican community.

**Ethnic Revival in the Post-1965 Era**

These melting pot theorists and pluralists did not anticipate the rapid transformation of the American racial and ethnic mosaic since the 1960s. As many other scholars have pointed out, notions of race and ethnicity in American society have been changed dramatically by the Civil Rights Movement and other ethnic social movements; vastly increased immigration from Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America post-1965; the ethnic revival; and the economic restructuring of globalization (Gans 1992; Alba and Nee 2009; Waters 1990).

Ethnicity is a significant factor in defining identity. Learning ancestral languages, embracing a hyphenated identity, eating ethnic foods, reversing the Anglicization of names, enjoying pop culture from the country of origin, homeland trips: all eventually became part of the American way (Gans 1979; Halter 2007). Coinciding with the demographic changes of the '60s, the new cultural politics of difference emerged as part of an effort to diffuse WASP male cultural hegemony (West 1990). Strongly influenced by Black Nationalism and the Black Power movements, new ethnic movements, such as yellow power and brown power, and identity politics for disenfranchised groups such as women and the queer community, became visible in the mainstream discourse (Crenshaw 1991; Ogbar 2001).
Gans first conceptualized the term “symbolic ethnicity” (1979), to argue that assimilation and ethnic identity are not separate concepts. He points out that today’s ethnic groups have not neglected assimilation, but have become more visible as a result of upward mobility, particularly among third generations. Despite assimilation and decreasing ethnic ties to traditional institutions, the third generation of European descent still perceive themselves as ethnic and maintain ethnic identities. Yet that identity is socio-psychological, rather than institutional and functional; they are less interested in their ethnic cultures and organizations, but more concerned with cultivating an ethnic identity, expressed in action and/or feeling. Gans argues that ethnicity now is symbolic, a manifestation of ancestral memory or presentation of exotic tradition. In this way, symbolic ethnicity refers to “a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation or the old country” and “a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior (1979: p9),” without costing anything to the daily life of the assimilated American. Third generation ethnic Americans of European descents can frequently enjoy their ethnicity without any social costs through ethnic holidays, fairs and festivals, cultural products, and ethnic food.

As Gans points out, ethnic holidays, events, and festivals are frequently part of the public sphere, albeit often commercialized and monetized, as seen in largely urban celebrations such as the St. Patrick’s Day Parade, National Puerto Rican Day, and the Lunar New Year. Nostalgia for country of origin is easily indulged through consumer goods, notably food, as they become widely available in and accepted by the American mainstream. In this process, individuals often have freedom to choose to practice their ethnic culture without social risks, because symbolic ethnicity “can be developed by allegiances to symbolic groups that never meet, or to
collectivities that meet only occasionally, and exist as groups only for the handful of officers that keep them going (Gans 1979: p12).” At the same time, these events and ethnic products raise the public awareness of their own ethnic group to people with no ethnic ties (Halter 2007). As observed in the ethnic revival, most third and later generation European Americans have been successfully incorporated into American society without necessarily losing—or having to disavow—their ethnic identity (Gans 1979; Waters 1990; Alba 1990). Among white ethnics, “ethnic identification involves both choice and constraint (Waters 1990: p19).”

Gans’ symbolic ethnicity balances assimilation and ethnic identity quite well; however, I add two points that Gans neglected. First, the role of the marketplace in ethnic identification, accompanying the initial ethnic revival and accelerating in the ’90s, has continued to intensify exponentially. Gans does note that consuming cultural products is a way to cultivate ethnic identity, but this has been profoundly enhanced in the past two decades through ethnic and multicultural marketing strategies. In the marketplace, it seems that ethnicity has been romanticized by consumers nostalgic for the homeland without requiring the intensive commitment of traditional and community-based ethnicity; these (quasi-)authentic products are more manageable and easily approachable, what Halter calls “portable ethnicity (Halter 2007: p9).” Second, unlike Gans and Halter, I argue that ethnicity is not always symbolic, portable, voluntary or optional. Many Asian Americans, for instance, often feel caught between economic assimilation and their persistent racialized minority status in the dominant culture (Kibria 2003; Dhingra 2007). In this, Korean Americans are not exceptional, and remain racialized as a minority in the U.S. racial order through both overt and covert discrimination. This, in turn, can become a critical component of why people seek out their cultural and ethnic roots. Third, as
discussed earlier this chapter, the practice of ethnic identity through cultural consumption isecoming much more transnational, rather than embedded solely within U.S. territory.

Asians are currently the fastest growing racial group in the U.S: the Asian population,
which was 1% of the U.S. population in 1960, increased to 2% in 1980 and 5% in 2010.
According to Pew Research projections, Asians are expected to make up 14% of the population
by 2065, even as non-Latino Whites fall below 50% (Lopez, Passel, and Rohal 2015). In the
consumer marketplace, Asians and Asian Americans’ buying power likewise seems to be
increasing. The earnings of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have already outpaced the
white counterpart, while the poverty rate is lower than other groups. According to the Bureau of
Labor Statistics, in 2013, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders earned $987 weekly on average,
more than any other group (e.g. $865 – White; $692 – Black; $641 - Hispanic), while the poverty
rate among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (13.0%) is lower than others ( 13.6% - White;
24.9% - Hispanic; 26.7% - Black). In fact, according to Bureau of Labor’s Consumer
Expenditure Survey in 2012, Asian American households spent 19% more than average
American households, particularly on food, transportation, housing, clothing and insurance
(Nielson 2013: p4).

The mainstream marketplace has quickly responded to changes in the U.S. racial
composition, such as in the emergence of various ethnic marketing’ or ‘multicultural marketing’
strategies, designed and promoted by the mainstream marketers and practiced by both
mainstream corporations and ethnic economic sectors (Rossman 1994; Cui 1998; Pires and
Stanton 2002; Halter 2007). Historically, marketers in the U.S. have recognized the market
segmentation of diverse consumer groups, according to e.g. gender, race and ethnicity, religion,
class, age and nationality (Rossman 1994); they have devised specific strategies to each group with similar needs (Smith and Cooper-Martin 1997), by associating brands with a particular consumer group lifestyles, values and/or languages (Brumbaugh, Grier, and Aaker 2002).

A critical example is the importance of the urban hip-hop youth segments in marketing, which has gone beyond targeting urban Black youth, as the cachet does not just sell products to that segment; market diffusion spreads the consumption to teens of many races who delve into rap and hip-hop (Klein 2000; Schreiber and Lenson 2001). In this way, inner-city Black youth, despite endless social and economic exclusion and discrimination, experience a certain “process of cultural inclusion into the orbit of American materialism and consumption (Nightingale 1994:p136).” Yet, beside the critiques that the Blackness represented in the mainstream media is rooted in consuming and exoticizing the Other (Crockett 2008), their response to market fragmentation itself is often negatively represented. For instance, tobacco and alcohol product companies have a tradition tracing back to the early 1950s of targeting impoverished and vulnerable populations, particularly Black American communities, through heavy use of commercial billboards and ads in ‘ethnic’ media (Moore, Williams, and Qualls 1996).

Ethnicity has also been used as “an emotional pitch that automatically segments the marketplace (Halter 2007; p43).” For instance, Procter &Gamble heavily promoted their new (1913) all-vegetable Crisco shortening to Jews keeping Kosher, while Maxwell House Coffee distributed Passover Haggadahs in the mid-1930s to make Jews aware that the product was Kosher for Passover (Halter 2007:p33-34). Ethnic marketing, referring to as “differentiated marketing towards an ethnic group” (Cui 1998:p88, cited in Pires and Stanton 2002; p113), or multicultural marketing, is thus a long-standing phenomenon; it has only intensified, reflecting
population changes and increasing purchasing power among racial minority groups in the post-1965 era.

Marketers in the 1970s and '80s learned that awareness of cultural diversity was a critical element for the success in the international market, accelerated by overseas market expansion and global flows of capital. By the 1990s, marketers and mainstream corporations also recognized that their understanding of multicultural facets of the marketplace should be expanded to the U.S. domestic market, and devised several strategies to reflect this change (Rossman 1994). Their strategies vary: including people of color in the advertisements, offering foreign language services for immigrants, sponsoring ethnic events and festivals, and placing the ads in the ethnic media in their own languages.

Notably, ethnic festivals and events are increasingly sponsored by mega corporations and given considerable attention in the mainstream media. The New York City St. Patrick’s Day parade, the oldest and the largest ethnic parade in the U.S., originally rooted in religious and agrarian struggles in Ireland (Marston 2002), has become a symbolic ritual among those of Irish descent, but also for the general population to take part in. The parade on March 17 is a public presentation of Irishness, even as it has morphed from the first march in New York in 1762 to a part of U.S. mainstream culture defined in part as a commercial enterprise and media event (Cronin and Adair 2004). The slogan “Everyone's Irish on St. Patrick's Day” reflects this commercialization and commodification of Irish identity. Big corporations, of course, never miss the opportunity to promote their brands through these ethnic festivals. The St. Patrick’s Day parade in New York City, attracting at least a million viewers on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, and another one million watching on television (West 2015), has been sponsored by corporations
such as Guinness, Heineken, and Ford, to Empire City Casino and CIE Tours International, Inc., to universitiess. According to the Wall Street Journal, the parade generated $686,000 in revenue in 2013, based on tax documents (West 2015). Likewise, the New York National Puerto Rican Day parade on June 15 in 2015 was sponsored by mega-corporations such as Time Warner, Goya, AT&T, Meredith, Dunkin Donuts, McDonald’s, JetBlue, Coco Cola, Health First, and many others (NPRDP Inc. 2015).

Some strategies are even more ambitious, targeting not only ethnic groups residing in the U.S. but also consumers in the home nations. For instance, on February 7 in 2015, American beer manufacturer Budweiser launched a Chinese Lunar New Year’s campaign, “Toast to Dreams.” While Miguel Patricio, a global chief marketing officer of Anheuser-Busch InBev, dressed up in traditional Chinese clothing, many Chinese personalities such as Ambassador Zhang Qiyue, actress Maggie Q, and singer Chen Kun participates in this event; a special advertisement in Chinese language was shown at One Times Square in New York (Yeu 2015). During the event, Budweiser constantly showed bottled beer wrapped in red with Chinese symbols, in order to attract Chinese viewers through Chinese-language ethnic media and national media in China, while the advertisement also delivered a message about Chinese tradition, combined with modern commercials to non-Chinese pedestrians and tourists in Times Square. By supporting this ethnic holiday in the U.S., Budweiser promoted their brand in New York, where 12% of the population are Asians; yet their ultimate goal was to promote its products in China.
Asians and Symbolic Ethnicity

Celebration of ethnic identity through quasi-authentic cultural products is widespread among U.S.-born hyphenated Americans; however, Gans’ positive outlook on ethnic revivals and practice of symbolic ethnicity seems limited to white ethnics to an extent. For non-white ethnics, the consequences are different. Despite the growing Asian population and increasing acceptance and popularity of Asian culture in the U.S., it is still questionable if ethnicity could be considered voluntary, subjective, portable and optional for children of Asian immigrants. As Portes and Zhou (1993) argue in their segmented assimilation theory, second generations might have different paths to assimilation: upward mobility patterns, downward mobility patterns, and “economic integration into middle class America with lagged acculturation and deliberate preservation of the immigrant community’s values and solidarity (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997:p984).” Particularly, some children of darker-skinned and less skilled immigrants would reject and/or fail in acculturation (Gans 1992).

Even though Asian Americans are considered a highly successful, and successfully assimilated, ethnic group (Gans 1992; Bonilla-Silva 2004; Alba and Nee 2009), and their cultural practices share similarities with those of white ethnics, Asians and Asian Americans’ experiences, like those of other ethnic minority groups, are distinct from the ethnic practice of most white ethnics. Critically, their ethnic identity is rooted in their collective experience as a racialized ethnicity (Kibria 1995; Tuan 1998). While Asians and Asian Americans in the post-1965 American racial hierarchy are ranked below Whites but above Blacks on an axis of superiority/inferiority, they are also positioned as apart from both groups on the axis of insider/foreigner, as Claire Jean Kim (2003) argues in her triangulation theory. Asian Americans,
whether they have lived in the U.S. for many generations or not, are often perceived as perpetual foreigners (Kibria 1995; Tuan 1998), as seen in a series of microagressions that Asian Americans often encounter in their daily lives. Particularly, aspects of Asian culture and/or ethnic cultures within the pan-Asian context are often singled out as weird and unpalatable, most notably many Asian ethnic foods. As a result, such practices remained solely in the private sphere as “a sign of nostalgia for an imagined time of simple reciprocal exchange” (Ray 2004: p87) to be celebrated and practiced through family meals until the 1990s. For newer generations, however, Western encounters with and perception of the Otherness of their ethnic goods in turn provides a vehicle for recognizing cultural difference from American norms.

The Transclave in a Global City

Ghettos and enclaves

Historically, an immigrant or ethnic enclave has negatively represented a form of urban segregation in the U.S. major cities, by highly focusing on residential segregation of urban racial and ethnic minority groups. Chicago School ecologists of the 1920s and 30s, whose research was rooted in social relations and its correlations with spatial relations, analyzed clustering of the population -- enclaves and ghettos, often interchangeably used-- as a space of social disorganization. Park (1928) and Burgess (1924, 1928) were the pioneers of this perspective. Park argued that the process of segregation was inevitable due to the growth of cities and witnessed among all racial minority groups, whether immigrant or not. Immigrant colonies, such as Chinatowns and the Little Sicilies, other so-called “ghettos” as well as the Black Belt, are inevitable outcomes produced by tendencies of city life and immigrants’ dislodging of
inhabitants to the next zone (Burgess 1924, 1928; Park 1928: p8-9). Yet, as analyzed in Park’s “race relations cycle”, through contact and interactions, “as the ties of race, of language, and of culture are weakened, successful individuals move out [from the ghettos and immigrant colonies] and eventually find their places in business and in the professions, among the older population group (1928: p9).”

Likewise, by historically tracing the residential segregation of Jews from medieval Europe to the city of Chicago in the early 20th century, Wirth (1928) saw the modern ghetto as a socio-psychological and ecological phenomenon. The ghettos were the poorest spaces, where immigrants, particularly Jews, were isolated. This modern ghetto is differentiated from the Jewish ghettos in medieval society, which were originally rooted in the customs and heritages, religious and secular, of the Jews themselves, and later compelled by law due to anti-Semitism (Wirth 1928). The modern ghetto of the early 20th century is an outcome of ecological change, through the growth of the city and the invasion of the slums by new immigrant groups. Due to this invasion, the ghetto was converted from an overgrown village in the urban outskirts to the slum of Chicago, by displacing the Germans and the Irish etc., and later by being displaced by the Poles and the Italians, and finally Black Americans (Wirth 1928).

The Chicago School scholars did not clearly distinguish between ghettos and immigrant colonies or ethnic enclaves (Marcuse 2002; Peach 2002). In Park’s writing, although not clearly stated, “The Ghetto” seems to mean the Jewish ghetto exclusively, while ‘so-called ghettos’ are likely to refer to the areas of concentrations in general (Marcuse 2002: p212); Wirth refers to 'ghetto' as “the modern Jewish immigrant settlement in the Western World (Wirth 1927: p57).” Both Park and Wirth were thus using the strictly European context; yet the ghettos studied by
Park and Wirth were similar to today's immigrant enclaves or immigrant colonies (Haynes 2008; Gans 2008), whereas the current understanding of 'ghetto' resonates negatively, with the rise of poor Black urban neighborhoods and series of urban riots therein (Massy and Denton 1993; Wacquant 2008). The U.S. urban ghettos are currently often understood as “an involuntary spatial segregation of a group (usually as racial) (Marcuse 1997:p231),” “residential apartheid” (Massey and Denton 1993), or “the outcast ghettos” (Wacquant 1993, 2008; Marcuse 1997; Gans 2002) of urban Black Americans. Their housing options, moreover, are restrained by a dual housing market (Stearns and Logan 1986; Galster 1988). This 'ghetto' is closer to those experienced negatively by European Jews—that is, the ghettos as they existed right before their destruction during the Holocaust—rather than their initial creation of self-segregated neighborhoods or the enclaves they made in some U.S. cities.

'Enclave' has a much more positive connotation, as a “temporary residential way-station (Logan, Alba and Zhang 2002: p301)” before spatial assimilation (Massey and Denton 1985). Unlike urban ghettos, implying involuntary segregation, enclaves are often considered voluntarily segregated, without stigmatization by the white majority (Marcuse 1997; Gans 2002). In these areas, a minority group and its group members share their language, culture, ethnicity or nationality (Gans 2002:p354) as means to strengthen economic, social, political and cultural development within the community (Marcuse 1997); they provide affordable housing, families, and job opportunities that are not easily found outside of the immigrant communities (Model 1985; Logan, Alba and Zhang 2002).

Despite a long debate among immigration scholars following the concept of the ethnic economy (Bonacich 1973; Light 1984), the term immigrant/ethnic enclave had not been clearly
conceptualized even as late as the early 1990s (Waldinger 1993; Light et al. 1994). However, I argue, why is the ethnic enclave important?

*Ethnic enclave economy debate: conceptual clarification*

Massive waves of immigration from Asia and Latin America fueled by the 1965 Immigration Act and the restructuring of the U.S. economy have drawn scholars’ attention to the new occupations that certain ethnic and immigrant groups hold, and the geographical concentrations of both residence and work, particularly in gateway metropolitan cities for immigrants. Such concentration holds true despite new destinations for immigrants, e.g. the Midwest, the South, small towns and rural areas (Waters and Jiménez 2005; Donato and Bankston 2008; Durand, Massey and Capoferro 2008; Fennelly 2008), and the spatial assimilation of ethnic groups into wealthier and more suburban neighborhoods, what Logan, Alba and Zhang call “ethnic community” -- “selected as living environment by those who have wider options based on their market resources” (Logan, Zhang and Alba 2002: p300-301).

Ethnic business and enterprise, deeply rooted on ethnic solidarity, often flourish in gateway cities. The literature on the ethnic economy and ethnic enterprise is well-established, as foreign-born immigrants have been overrepresented in small business since the late 19th century (Light 1984; Light et al. 1994). The ethnic economy is based on the sociological questions and understanding of ethnic minority groups, who occupy intermediate positions, are mostly self-employed, and create entrepreneurial communities (Kim 1981; Boswell and Curtis 1984). This contradicts the popular belief that most immigrants, despite the nation's recruitment of skilled immigrants, are relegated to low-status positions in various host societies, and achieve economic
success only despite the hostility and initial disadvantages. Immigrants with intermediate positions are concentrated in certain occupations --- trade and commerce in particular, but also other “middleman lines” such as agent, labor contractor, rent collector, money lender and broker (Bonacich 1973; Modell 1977; Bonacich and Modell 1980). These middleman minorities are often believed to be used as buffers to divert mass frustrations; they typically include Jews in Europe and in the U.S., Chinese in Southeast Asia, Asians in East Africa, and Japanese, Greeks, and later Koreans in the U.S. (Bonacich 1973). Business is often found in immigrant-owned family stores, which rely on unpaid family labor or cheap labor from extended family members and co-ethnics, who work long hours in labor-intensive jobs (Bonacich 1973; Bonacich and Modell 1980). These immigrants tend to generate ethnic resources, e.g., relative satisfaction, reactive solidarities, sojourning orientation, and cultural endowments, but also bring class resources, e.g. private property, human capital, money, bourgeois values, attitude, knowledge and skills (Light 1984: p201-202; Min and Bozorgmehr 2000).

The concept of ethnic economy, however, does not explain “the geographical clustering” or density of firms (Light et al. 1994: p66). These businesses are simply ethnic because the owners and the employees are co-ethnics, whether their customers are co-ethnics or not (Light et al. 1994). For instance, Koreans both in New York City and Los Angeles in the post-1965 era have been heavily wholesalers of wig, footwear, and clothes; retailers of cloth and jewelry; greengrocers; and operators of laundromats, nail salons, liquor stores, and convenience stores. These stores are not necessarily concentrated in proximate areas of immigrant residence; in fact, they commonly spread out across the city, particularly in minority neighborhoods where the consumers are not always co-ethnics. This has had consequences such as the series of interracial
conflicts between Black Americans and Korean immigrants in gateway cities, e.g. the 1992 L.A riots, the Red Apple Boycotts in Brooklyn, and boycotts of Korean stores on the South Side of Chicago in the 1990s.

U.S. immigration laws encourage migration of highly skilled professional workers, while barring less skilled immigrants. Physicians, surgeons, nurses, speech therapists, pharmacists and dietitians are given a Schedule position with privileges when applying for an immigration visa. Yet the flow of less skilled immigrants never ceases, due to immigration without many restrictions (Puerto Ricans), family reunification provisions (Koreans), and undocumented immigration (Mexicans) (Wilson and Portes 1980: p299-300). The skilled immigrants participate in the primary labor market, with more resources for possible upward mobility, whereas the less skilled immigrants dominate the secondary labor market. Scholars of dual labor market thus argue that most new immigrants with limited resources will be concentrated in the secondary sector (Wilson and Portes 1980).

By evaluating and criticizing the dual market labor theory, consisting of the primary sector (center) and the secondary sector (periphery) of the market, Wilson and Portes (1980) shed light on spatial concentrations of immigrant enterprises—what they call the “ethnic enclave economy.” In the ethnic enclave economy, immigrants can benefit to create opportunities through ethnic solidarity (Portes and Bach 1985). Their case study was based on Cubans in Miami. Although the Cuban Refugee Program under the Kennedy administration was designed to relocate Cubans throughout the country, the most significant number of Cuban refugees were established in Miami by the early 1970s. Economic capital accumulated in high-wage industrial regions and brought from Cuba allowed for the creation of this immigrant enclave, whose
businesses included textiles, leather, furniture, cigar making, construction and finance, as well as the service sectors, e.g. restaurants, supermarkets, clinics and private schools. However, Wilson and Portes rebut the traditional understanding of ethnic enclave economy involving exploitative sweatshop conditions (Waldinger 1993); based on the analysis of a longitudinal survey of Cuban male refugees in Miami and Hialeah over two periods--initial interviews in 1973-1974 and the follow-ups in 1976-1977, Wilson and Portes argue that immigrants are not restricted to the secondary labor market (Wilson and Portes 1980: p302). Immigrants in that enclave are similar to those in the primary sector, rather than those in the secondary sector. Even low-wage immigrant workers in the ethnic enclave economy gain similar returns on human capital investment, like workers in the primary market; due to ethnic solidarity, the ethnic enclave economy thus creates new opportunities for economic incorporation (Portes and Bach 1985). Wilson and Portes (1980) thus conclude that the dual labor market theory does not capture economic activities observed in immigrant enclaves – particularly Cubans in Miami, but also found in other groups such as Japanese and Koreans. They suggest the ethnic enclave economy as separate from the primary and the secondary sectors of the dual labor market.

Portes and his colleagues' analysis, however, raised controversy, which was presented in Sanders and Nee’s article on Cuban immigrants in Miami and Hialeah and the Chinese enclave in San Francisco, California. The exchange between Portes and his colleagues and Sanders and Nee, which continued into the 1990s, centered at two main points. First, there is a question of whether the ethnic enclave economy is beneficial for the wage and returns on human capital to immigrants or not. Criticizing Wilson and Portes (1980) and Portes and Bach (1985)’s arguments that enclave workers earn high return on human capital investments, Sanders and Nee found that
Cuban enclave immigrants in Miami and Hialeah earn less and receive lower returns on human-capital compared to Cuban immigrants elsewhere, while Cuban immigrants and non-Latino white immigrants who live outside an enclave are similar to each other. Enclave dwellers are also culturally less assimilated than Cuban immigrants living outside of Miami and Hialeah (Sanders and Nee 1987: p752, p755). Likewise, Chinese immigrants in San Francisco are more disadvantaged than Chinese immigrants outside of San Francisco; yet Chinese immigrants outside San Francisco are more disadvantaged than non-Latino white immigrants living outside of San Francisco (p758). Even the self-employed Chinese immigrants in San Francisco tend to be more disadvantaged than the self-employed Chinese immigrants and non-Hispanic white immigrants outside of San Francisco (p759). In fact, Sanders and Nee show that the ethnic enclave only benefits the self-employed, but not the employees in the private sector; their argument is in line with previous research indicating that the spatial concentration of minority groups exhausts good job opportunities (Duncan and Lieberson 1959; Lieberson 1963; Frisbie and Neidert 1977; Parcel 1979; Sanders and Nee 1987: p747).

Zhou and Logan (1991) look at Manhattan’s Chinatown. Chinatown, offering residential opportunities for newer immigrants while providing business and work opportunities, has been an isolated urban island based on a social structure of sojourning in the late 19th century, even as it has allured locals and tourists seeking exoticism (Lin 1998, 2011; Liu 2009); its residential space has appealed to commercial development (Kwong 1996; Aldrich and Waldinger 1990; Zhou and Logan 1991; Zhou 1992). Zhou and Logan argue that the settlement patterns of the Chinese in New York is a voluntary process, basically rooted in kinship networks. Although Chinatown used to be a residential enclave, it is now a prosperous ethnic enclave facilitating
assimilation (Zhou and Logan 1991; Zhou 1992). Although the Chinese spread out across the city, and many live in satellite Chinatowns in Flushing, Queens, and Sunset Park, Brooklyn, their ties to the enclave are persistent (p405). In this sense, as Portes and his colleagues insist, 'enclave' is not a negative term, but describes a place where “the culture instills pride and confidence in individuals, thus building and strengthening ethnic identity and solidarity (Zhou 1992: p224).” A similar trend also was observed in the barrios of Los Angeles.

Second, they also dispute the definition of ethnic enclave/ethnic enclave economy whether it indicates a place of firms (Wilson and Portes 1980; Portes and Jensen 1989; Logan, Alba and McNulty 1994) or a place of residence (Sanders and Nee 1987). Portes and his colleagues argue that an ethnic enclave should be understood as a place of work or the location of ethnic firms, consisting of “immigrant groups which concentrate in a distinct spatial location and organize a variety of enterprises serving their own ethnic market and/or the general population (Portes 1981: p291),” with “all men indicating employment in firms owned by [co-ethnics]; this group includes the significant number of self-employed businessmen identified previously (Portes and Bach 1985: p217).” This definition includes Jews in lower East Side of Manhattan at the turn of the 20th century, Japanese on the West Coast before WWI, and Cubans in Miami and Koreans in Los Angeles in the post-1965 era (Portes and Manning 1987). Portes and Jensen insist that sociological understandings of the ethnic enclave -- 'immigrant enclave' or 'enclave', used interchangeably -- differ from everyday use as simple residential agglomerations (Portes and Jensen 1989: p930). Portes and Bach suggest the term 'immigrant neighborhoods' (or 'ethnic neighborhoods' in Portes and Jensen’s article), distinguished from 'enclave'; immigrant neighborhoods are where “immigrant groups initially settle in ethnically concentrated
communities and generate a few small business to serve immediate, specialized consumption needs,” yet “lack the extensive division of labor of the enclave and, especially, its highly differentiated entrepreneurial class” (Portes and Bach 1985: p204-205; Portes and Jensen 1989: p933; Portes and Manning 1987: p52). Portes and his colleagues’ understanding of the immigrant enclaves as geographical proximity with “a dense network of industrial, commercial and financial enterprises (Portes and Manning :p52)” is dependent on social and economic resources and solidarity among co-ethnics. However, Logan, Alba and Zhang define immigrant enclaves as less desirable resident areas where recently arrived immigrants with little socio-economic capital are concentrated (Logan, Alba and Zhang 2002:p300).

Such ambiguity and inconstancy of the term's definition might, as Light (1994) et al. argue, be drawn from the limit of quantitative data, e.g. census data, and making it fit to available quantitative data. Units of analysis vary from individuals to firms in cities (e.g. Cubans in Miami and Chinese in San Francisco by Portes and his colleagues, and by Sanders and Nee), in boroughs (e.g. Chinese living in Manhattan or other boroughs in New York by Zhou and Logan) or in metropolitan areas (e.g. various ethnic enclaves in the New York and Los Angeles metropolitan regions by Logan, Zhang and Alba; Chinese enclaves in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver by Fong and Shen). Yet if the regions in these analysis are that much wider and businesses are spread out across the borough, city and metropolitan area, can the spatial concentration really be significant?

There would not be many ethnic enclave economies that meet the three dimensions of the enclave, e.g. co-ethnicity of owners and co-ethnic employees, spatial concentration, and sectoral specialization, suggested by Portes and his colleagues. For example, Iranians in L.A. do not
necessarily hire co-ethnics; most are self-employed, and do not have to return human-capital, as a form of apprenticeship, to their employees (Light et al 1994). Koreatown in L.A. and Little Havana in Miami might be only two enclaves to meet all the criteria (Min 1989; Light et al 1994). But as Min (1989) observed, Korean owners hire not only co-ethnic Koreans but also Latino workers. Recently, this trend is more frequently observed not only in ethnic firms but also shops, restaurants and stores. At any kind of ethnic restaurants in large gateway cities, it is easy to find non co-ethnic workers, as bussers, dishwashers, or even cooks, although ethnic division of labor is frequently observed in these cases.

Given these circumstances, is there any difference between the ethnic economy and ethnic enclave economy hypotheses? Is its spatial concentration significant in analyzing the ethnic enclave economy and its possible return on human capital? Should we drop the term ethnic enclave, as Waldinger (1993) and Light (1994) argue?

A transclave: beyond traditional ethnic enclaves

Despite the different understandings of the enclave from the everyday use, as a residential agglomeration, to the sociological understanding – limited within the economic sector -- as Portes and his colleagues argue, many researchers from various fields, such as geography and urban studies, understand the enclaves, as somewhat mixture of a place of work, residence, and commerce and interchangeably use terms, e.g. an ethnic enclave, an ethnic communities, a quarter, a barrio, an ethnic neighborhood, or an ethnic place (Zhou 1992; Chacko 2003; Laguerre 2010; Lin 2011). Their understanding of the enclave, especially if ethnic economies are entirely based on trade and service, is closer to what Portes and his colleagues call an immigrant/ethnic
neighborhood (Portes and Jensen 1989; Logan, Alba and McNulty 1994:p695; Portes and Manning 2008).

Yet, from the earlier years, our imagination of the ethnic enclave generally has been limited within a small geographical area, -- whether it is a place of work or residence -- where a distinct ethnic group is marked through the use of distinctive symbols, -- often expressed in signs, art and architecture, retail stores, and language-- e.g. Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Little Havana, or Little India (Chacko 2003: p25; Laguerre 2010: p15). As many sociologists have observed from the earlier years, it is a place for work and/or for residence with the class division and conflicts with spatial concentration (Gold 2015). It also is, whether it has a negative connotation by outsiders as a dangerous ghetto or barrio with a high crime rate or not, a place where many members of the ethnic community, both immigrants or their descendants, still maintain their symbolic and emotional ties and roots through consumer goods and services (Gans 1997; Zhou 1992; Alba 1990; Chacko 2003; Laguerre 2010; Lin 2011). In fact, it was the second home for immigrants and their children.

Yet, more recently, many scholars have observed new trends in ethnic enclaves beyond the traditional understanding of the enclave from as a segregated ghetto to as a place of work and residence or of location of ethnic firms. First, immigrants’ residential areas have diversified over time. Immigrants do not necessarily live or establish their businesses in the inner-city of gate cities. Instead, as wealthier or upwardly mobile immigrants settle down in suburbs, ethnic businesses also follow the pattern (Fong 1994; Zhou, Tseng and Kim 2008), what Li (1998, 2008, 2009) calls “ethnoburbs,” suburban ethnic clusters of residential areas and business
districts in large metropolitan areas (Li 1998:p482),” in her case study of San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles County.

In the gateway cities of the United States and other receiving societies, some ethnic enclaves yet have lost their traditional residents, but recently had a revival, catching outsiders’ eyes, luring more locals and tourists to a space for consumption, entertainment and leisure (Hall and Rath 2007; Zukin 2009; Aytar and Rath 2012). In such a society, consumer culture has become a symbolic means, creating an economically-based method of self-identification and reshaping urban landscape. Ethnic consumer culture, commodified and commercialized, territorializes the urban landscape, making the nation’s image more multicultural and socially diverse (Zukin 1995). Each section of the city, rather than the city as whole, represents its collective imaginations, potentially carrying the marketable images.

This trend, however, is not a novel phenomenon but on-going urban history of immigrant cities. In New York, for example, since the early 20th century, despite its spatial segregation from the mainstream due to Chinese Exclusion, Chinatowns across the city have seduced many local New Yorkers and travelers (Lin 1998, 2011; Liu 2009) in search of not only exotic food, but also gambling houses, brothels, and opium dens (Greinacher 1998). Ethnic themes and styles of landscape of Chinatowns from the traditional main gates to building styles represent not just a sign of shared history of their people and culture in the community, but also a tool to highlight their exoticism and to market a sense of place to outsiders (Li 2015). Likewise, by the 1980s, Little Italy, which was a home for Italian immigrants and Italian descendants, had decreasing numbers of Italian residents due to a decrease in new Italian immigration and to their moving out to suburban areas (Freeman 1987; Battistella 1989; Conforti 1996; Kosta 2014). Yet in the 1970s,
with ethnic revival and resurgence of ethnic pride, the preservation of New York City’s Little Italy was organized by the Little Italy Restoration Association. This neighborhood on Mulberry Street has turned into a pedestrian mall on Sundays – pedonalizzazione (pedestrianization) – in the presence of red, white, and green flags, which symbolize Italian ethnic culture, and was claimed as New York’s Historic Little Italy in the 1970s (Cummings 1974: Conforti 1996:p834).

What is new, or if not, what has been intensified, is that public efforts on diversity are deeply embedded on urban policies from urban planning and (re)development (Sennett 1992; Fainstein 2005) to urban (or city) branding strategies for global competitions (Greenberg 2000, 2009; Jensen 2007). In the post-industrial city, leisure, entertainment, and tourism industry are at the center of policy-making for revenue of the city (Hoffman 2003; Aytar and Rath 2012; Li 2015). This new tourism trend, often observed in historic preservation and heritage tourism, was enthusiastically upheld by urban policy makers, developers, entrepreneurs, community leaders through various forms of public-private partnership have been documented in the recent literature (Lin 2011; Li 2015). For example, the Explore Chinatown campaign, funded by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) and the September 11 Fund, began to market Chinatown; it was done through advertisements about traditional events such as the Lunar New Year and the Autumn Moon festival in newspapers and magazines and on the subway, in order to revamp the community, negatively influenced by September 11 attack (Lin 2011). LMDC, 911 Foundation and New York Tourism Company sponsored to set up the Chinese Tourist Information kiosk at where Canal, Baxter, and Walker Street meet (Li 2015).

Simply, city government spends much money on advertisement in order to market its city. Yet, more fundamentally, by investing into ethnic enclaves and connecting ethnicity to tourism
industry, and by collaborating with public and private stakeholders, city government brands its image and reputation of its city as “multicultural,” whether it is really happening or not. As Anderson shows, Melbourne’s Chinatown, once an immigrant ghetto, was selected as symbol of cultural diversity and celebrated for civic pride and tourism (Anderson 1990); similar patterns are documented in many enclaves of North American, Australian and European cities, such as Sydney (Collins 2006; Ang 2015), London (Shaw 2011), and Vancouver (Pottie-Sherman 2013).

For tourists, tourism has extended its scope beyond traditional tourist activities, e.g. sightseeing, eating, or visiting museums and art galleries; ethnicity and diversity sound promising for tourists who seek for authentic experiences (Hoffman 2003). But the represented ethnic markers in the landscape of Little Italy seem to be quasi-authentic. The preservation of historic Little Italy in the 70s, although it would have been understood as the ethnic preservation movement, was in fact driven by restaurant owners who were eager to attract tourists (Conforti 1996). Likewise, Becker (2015) recently documents that although owners of the restaurants might be Italian descents, many staff members at Italian restaurants are Albania Kosovars, welcoming their patrons in limited Italian language, and acting like Italian ethnics. In fact, their presence has nothing to do with their ethnicity and nativity, but how their ethnicity, as passing as Italians, is assumed by outsiders, what Becker calls “assumed ethnicity,” referring to “ethnic group strategically presenting itself as another ethnic group, neither assimilating into mainstream society ethnicity nor validating place of origin ethnicity (p110).” In such quasi-authentic places, ethnic enclaves might be turned into what Krase calls “ethnic theme park”; this is “a place where the experience of the ethnic ‘other’ is for sale, particularly to tourists (Krase 1997; p105).”
Koreatown as a transclave

The rise of new ethnic enclaves, or traditional ethnic enclaves in transition, in the context of urban development and transnational flows now seems to be a global phenomenon, at least in gateway cities. In order to analyze such “transnational changes” and increasing “leisure and consumption opportunities” in ethnic enclaves (Hall and Rath 2007), new concepts and terms have been introduced by scholars through case studies of various ethnic enclaves and neighborhoods. Laguerre (2010) introduces the term “cosmonation” in order to analyze the global social formation of Chinatown in San Francisco, and the South Asian community in Sacramento, California. For Laguerre, an ethnic neighborhood should be understood as a local place as well as a transnational and global entity; each ethnic neighborhood across the globe is a node, a small part of a larger network, and is interconnected with each other as well as to the homeland (p20). Likewise, but with more solid empirical data, Hum (2004, 2008), Zhou (2004) and Logan and Zhang (2010) use the “global neighborhood” to connect the local context to the global context; this term refers to the increasing numbers of multi-racial and multi-ethnic neighborhoods -- in most cases, neighborhoods mixing Asians and Latinos as well as whites. Based on her case study of Sunset Park, Brooklyn, a predominantly Chinese and Latino neighborhood, Hum (2014) further explains that an “immigrant global neighborhood” contains global and local dynamics; a neighborhood economy now centered on immigrant markets, including transnational real estate; and complex race and class conflicts about neighborhood identity and development trajectories (Hum 2004: p6).

institutional places,” serving as connectors for community and helping immigrants to settle down in a new society (churches and secular associations and institutions); “ethnic sociocommerscape,” areas with a concentration of ethnic businesses offering goods and services and community meeting places; “arenas or transient ethnic places,” a neutral space for cultural and religious events (public spaces); and “intangible ethnic place” (cyberspace). Likewise, Shaw (2011) in his study on Banglatown, London’s Curry Capital from the mid-1990, adopts the term 'ethnoscape' from Appadurai (1996), as landscapes of those who “constitute the shifting world in which we live (Appadurai 1996:p33).” By analyzing ethnoscapes as spaces of consumption, Shaw argues that Banglatown was promoted by local authorities under the New Labor Government, collaborating with local business people and non-governmental agencies, as an “exotic cityscape[] that offer[s] possibilities for urban ethnic tourism (p383).”

Manhattan’s Koreatown is in a line with such enclaves. I have developed the concept of the “transclave,” by locating Manhattan’s Koreatown within the rise and fall of ethnic enclaves in U.S. cities, and recent changes in academic and public understandings of such places. A transclave, in this context, refers to a hyper-consumption ethnic space, lacking residences, where people (entrepreneurs and consumers regardless of their race, ethnicity and gender), transnational corporations, and pop and consumer culture move back and forth between two nations and become embedded in a small section of a global city; a sending country’s government engages in the transnational process in order to (re)produce a meaning of the nation and its culture and to ultimately maximize its profits. Koreatown offers a unique but generalizable case study of an ethnic enclave in transition to a new type of transnational enclave for consumption and entertainment. Koreatown, as a transclave, is both “transnational” and an “enclave.” It is not a
singular case, as these traits are shared by new enclaves or traditional enclaves in transition. However, I argue that, despite its generalizability, Koreatown – and the transclave as a concept – also has unique traits differentiating it from other ethnic enclaves.

First, it is an enclave in a sociological sense, where Korean businesses, e.g. restaurants, bars, cafes, local newspaper offices, language schools, lawyers and doctors’ offices, and wholesale stores are concentrated. The businesses mainly rely on co-ethnic laborers, but also Latino workers. Their clients include both co-ethnics and non co-ethnics; however, their target consumers, except for a few businesses such as lawyers and doctors, are non-Koreans. Although Korean restaurants are spreading throughout the city, many are strategically aggregated within that block-- 32nd Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway. However, unlike other enclaves, as pointed out earlier, Koreatown has never provided residence for newer immigrants, and is zoned as a commercial district by the New York City Department of City Planning. This has made Koreatown a uniquely hyper-consumption district, where restaurants and bars never close.

Second, Koreatown is not just ethnic but transnational in terms of its businesspeople and consumers, the characteristics of its businesses, and, most importantly, the involvement of the Korean government. Items and products directly are imported from a sending country are common enough, of course (Waldinger, Ward and Aldrich 1985); in this sense, every ethnic enclave has a degree of transnationality. However, in Koreatown both entrepreneurs and consumers are transnational in terms of their movement between two nations, and their unique way of engagement with the homeland. Most entrepreneurs go beyond selling received “Korean” or “Korean style” products, but take business trips to Korea in order to catch up with Seoul style consumption trends and bring it back to New York. Moreover, unlike ethnic stores – mostly
mom-and-pop stores—in traditional ethnic neighborhoods, Koreatown businesses are not typically small businesses; in fact, many entrepreneurs have multiple stores across the city and New Jersey (see Chapter 4). Even many immigrant-owned stores have been replaced by Korean franchises and brands, a trend which has intensified since 2010 (see Chapters 3 and 4). Various consumer groups – Korean nationals, Korean Americans and non-Koreans in their twenties and thirties, the so-called 'consumer generation' – also practice transnationalism, by traveling between two countries, consuming pop and consumer cultures in Koreatown and in cyberspace; their consumption has been (re)shaped by new media outlets, such as Youtube, and various websites that quickly offer English subtitles for newly released Korean media.

Most importantly, despite its similarities with other new enclaves, Koreatown, as a transclave, is unique in garnering heavy investment from the Korean government (see Chapters 2 and 3); Koreatown in Manhattan has been considered a platform to popularize and commercialize not only “ethnic culture” but also the “nation’s culture,” for the potential profit of both the Korean government and Korean corporations. Located at the heart of Manhattan and within walking distance of tourist attractions such as the Empire State Building, Times Square, and Highline Park, Koreatown attracts many tourists; however, unlike Little Italy and Chinatown, which have longer histories and immigrant heritage (Lin 2011; Kosta 2014), Koreatown has been never a target for “ethnic tourism” on the part of the local, New York City government. It has been only few years since the local media, both traditional and new media, began to pay attention to Koreatown and Korean food (see Chapter 7). Instead, local entrepreneurs, mostly Korean immigrants, have been the main movers in boosting the enclave economy; more recently, the Korean government has stepped in for nation branding projects.
creating positive images of the country through cultural content, leisure, entertainment and consumer culture, aimed at maximizing profit returns not for co-ethnic employers, but to the nation’s industry.

In this context, a transclave in a global city can play the role of a public advertisement within a nation branding effort, even if it does not make enough sales to make a profit. Manhattan’s Koreatown is a unique case, but, in fact, not the only case studied. Ang (2015), albeit being very briefly and without much detail, has pointed to Thai Town on Campbell Street in Sydney as separating itself from Chinatown in order to brand its distinct ethnic identity, with efforts by local Thai entrepreneurs and the support of the Thai consulate and Sydney City Council (p7). The concept of the transclave provides a new model for this form of enclave in a post-industrial society, as it best reflects how this particular structure encourages cultural circulation and transmission, as well as economic benefit for the sending nation.

Method

This dissertation is based on qualitative research, consisting of 1) 111 in-depth interviews with 17 producers (business owners and managers in Koreatown, as well as staff at the Korean Food Foundation and Korea-related organizations) and 94 consumers (33 Korean nationals, 30 Korean Americans and 31 non-Koreans), and 2) participant observation during my time as a consumer, teacher and employee in Koreatown from 2008 to 2013. I have taught Korean language classes weekly at both a community college (four semesters: February 2010-May 2011, and February 2013-May 2013) and two non-profit organizations (March 2008-August 2009 and
January 2013-September 2013); I also worked with young Korean nationals at a TOEFL school as a college for 20 hours a week in Koreatown between June and December 2012.

My intensive fieldwork and in-depth interviews were conducted in 2012-2013. My initial, informal research began in February 2008, when I started to observe Koreatown as a transnational space for ethnic Koreans. At this point, my role was limited to passive participation; I did not seek out interaction, but observed the space as a consumer. In this role, I began to develop my research questions: why does Koreatown lag behind Seoul in terms of physical appearance? Why do Korean nationals spend time in Koreatown although they have other leisure spaces as alternative options? Why were these immigrant businesses able to open stores in the heart of Manhattan, with its high land values?

One month later, I was invited to participate in a Korean American grassroots organization’s Korean class team, by teaching a Korean class and recruiting students. The classes were offered near Koreatown, and I participated through August 2009. Through this activity, I expanded my role to active participation as I interacted with my students, mostly second generation Korean Americans who often expressed interest in their roots and ethnic culture. Having established a rapport with some of my students and members at the organization, I later invited them for in-depth interviews during preliminary research from late 2009 to Summer 2010.

In January 2010, I was hired as an adjunct faculty member for the weekend language program at one of the urban community colleges in New York City; they had not offered a Korean class for a few years, and were resuming it that semester. The first semester, I was the only the Korean class instructor in the program. The class met on Saturday mornings for three
hours. Based on my experience in teaching Korean classes at the first non-profit organization, I expected to have more heritage learning students; however, I only had three Korean American students, while 18 were non-ethnic Koreans. I continued my participant observation as a teacher in the language programs until Spring 2011; as with the Korean Americans in my earlier class, I invited some of these students for interviews, during my official fieldwork in 2012. In order to avoid any unethical pressure in my role as an instructor, I did not recruit these interviewees during the semester; all were invited after classes ended or by the time I left the college, in June 2011.

In 2012 summer, I began a new job at a small TOEFL prep school in Koreatown; my intent was to delve further into the field as an insider and employee in Koreatown. I was hired as a college counselor, advising students on completing college and applying to graduate school. In this position I was able to observe how the system of enclave business worked, got inside gossip on Koreatown, and recruited some additional interviewees through the network I established at my work. I worked in this capacity for 20 hours per week from June to December 2012; I left due to an personal conflict with the owner, which I will describe in detail in the appendix 'Methodological Notes'.

Overlapping with this position, I taught Korean language at a second non-profit organization, located on 32nd Street in Koreatown, between October 2012 and September 2013. While the first non-profit was a grassroots political organization consisting of Korean American activists, the second organization was operated by a small Korean church in New York City. The first organization actively targeted students who identify as a Korean; it is clearly stated in their mission that their purposes in offering Korean classes is to help shape and assert a Korean
identity in an English-dominant society, and to bridge generational gaps between the first generation and the 1.5+ generations. Although non-Koreans were equally welcome at the first organization, the Korean classes at the second organization explicitly targeted non-Koreans who were interested in Korean culture, satisfying the growing desire for Korean language education among non-Koreans.

This teaching experience at the second non-profit was an opportunity to observe the logistics of the program and students’ needs in terms of learning Korean. The number of students I taught in one term (ten weeks) was roughly between 15 and 20; most were non-Korean adults, excepting a few Korean Americans; some had traveled in Korea, while a few were expatriates or planning to teach English in South Korea; the racial composition of the classes varied, but about half the students were Asians, either U.S. citizens or temporary residents. In Spring 2013, while teaching at this organization, I also returned to the Korean language program at the community college to teach for another semester.

I completed my official fieldwork, both the in-depth interviews and participant observation, in September 2013, at which point I left the second non-profit organization; however, I have occasionally interviewed some people whom I have encountered since as well.

Chapter Outline

The body of this dissertation consists of two parts. Part I, consisting of Chapters 2, 3 and 4, offers a historical analysis of nation branding in South Korea, focusing on policies that
emerged after the 1997 financial crisis, and its implementation in New York City, facilitated by collaboration with entrepreneurs.

Chapter 2 (From Nation Building to Nation Branding: Economic Restructuring and Soft Power Policies in South Korea) traces the modern history of South Korea in reference to the process of economic and political development since 1961. This history is divided into three stages, based on the type of economy, executive regime, and cultural policies of each era: nation building (1961-1987), transition (1987-1997), and nation branding (post-1997). I highlight the third stage, the nation branding that followed the economic crisis of 1997, analyzing how Presidential administrations during this time strategically devised cultural policies to market the nation as a leading cultural entity throughout Asia.

In Chapter 3 (“Transclave”: Branding Korea, Embedded in Global City), I turn my attention to New York City. This chapter investigates how the Nation Branding project and cultural policies in South Korea, as well as changes within New York City, have contributed to demographic changes in Manhattan’s Koreatown and the role of consumers in the formation of a new type of ethnic enclave -- the transclave. I place the current Nation Branding projects into historical context, illuminating the top-down influence of government branding policies on the formation of Koreatown as a transnational space for consumption and entertainment, moving away from its earlier model as a production site. I particularly highlight the project for the globalization of Korean food, sponsored and supported by Korean government agencies in New York City.

Chapter 4 (Reinventing Koreatown: Typology of Transnational Entrepreneurs) shows how top-down policies overseas are practiced transnationally and embedded in New York City,
co-organized by transnational entrepreneurs in Koreatown—primarily Korean immigrants. In this process, these Korean entrepreneurs act as mediators between South Korea’s top-down nation branding strategies and bottom-up participation by various consumer groups.

Part II, consisting of Chapters 5, 6, and 7, examines the stories of various consumer groups, who participate in nation branding from the bottom up: Korean nationals, Korean Americans and non-Korean consumers.

Chapter 5 (Dirty and Dingy Koreatown: Reconstruction of Koreatown by Korean Nationals) analyzes the experience of Korean nationals in Manhattan’s Koreatown. These Korean nationals make a commitment to create positive images of the nation, introducing contemporary Korean culture, e.g. Korean pop culture, food and entertainment, to New York’s consumption scene. Korean nationals reinvent Koreatown from below as a platform for the transmission of Korean culture. Some voluntarily participate in cultural events by collaborating with government agencies, Korean corporations and Koreatown entrepreneurs, and by promoting Koreatown as a transclave where one can experience contemporary Korean culture transferred directly from Korea. More often, however, Korean nationals are indirectly involved in nation branding projects as cultural transmitters.

In Chapter 6 (Journey to Ethnic Identity: Korean Americans in Koreatown), I turn my attention to Korean Americans, who as a group both assimilate into the American mainstream through economic growth and institutional change, and face stereotyping by the mainstream media and policy makers as part of a ‘model minority’. They often feel caught between a racialized minority status and the ‘mainstream’ culture surrounding them. Yet while immigrants often combat the racial status as Other with attempts at total cultural assimilation, this status
frequently prompts Korean Americans to maintain transnational ties with the motherland. As teens and young adults, this is particularly visible in cultural and ethnic consumption, e.g. watching Korean dramas and movies, listening to Korean pop music, and eating Korean foods and even homeland trips. In this process, Koreatown becomes public space on which Korean Americans maintain and practice transnational ties to Korea through cultural and ethnic consumption and entertainment, a practice previously limited to the private realm of the home and family. In Koreatown, they claim their “ethnic authenticity” even as it is commercialized, with racial insecurity fading away in the face of collective understanding of their culture and history in the U.S.

In Chapter 7 (The Popularity of Korean Food and Pop Culture among non-ethnic Koreans), I analyze non-Korean consumers, who while the least active participants in nation branding projects in Koreatown are the most desirable target consumers for transnational entrepreneurs in Koreatown and Korean government. By incorporating the story of non-Koreans’ attraction to Korean culture into reproducing Koreatown as a space for imagined Korean pop culture and cuisine, I argue that Korean pop culture is becoming a tool with which to cross cultural boundaries among mostly Asians, Latinos, and some African Americans, and attract them to consumption in Koreatown in the context of Hallyu. I also pay attention to those New York consumers who are interested in ethnic foods in general and Korean food in particular, highlighting the globalization of Korean food projects and contextualizing the growing popularity of Korean food -- an outgrowth of the ethnic revival and consumerism that markets ethnicity in the U.S.
In Chapter 8, I conclude my dissertation by evaluating its contributions and limitations. I also propose possibilities for future research.
PART I. TOP-DOWN POLICIES AND THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP
Chapter 2

From Nation Building to Nation Branding: Economic Restructuring Process and Soft Power Policies in South Korea

Jae-Sang Park, known as Psy, burst onto the U.S. pop music scene with his song “Gangnam Style,” sung in Korean; as he made appearances on popular television shows including NBC’s Today Show, the Ellen DeGeneres Show, and Saturday Night Live, many Koreans in both the United States and South Korea paid close attention to how American media depicted him. Although many Korean entertainment companies had already achieved great success in the Asian market and some parts of Latin America through Hallyu, Korean wave, the popularity of Korean pop culture, none received major public attention in the U.S. music industry. When “Gangnam Style” set a world record on Youtube by hitting 1 billion views, the Korean public was collectively ecstatic that Korean pop music had finally had an impact in the American market.

The Korean government and media likewise honored Psy’s U.S. success, with the performer portrayed as a symbol of the Korean wave worldwide and the Korean media closely followed his coverage in mainstream U.S. media. Psy himself promised to hold a free concert if he gained the top spot on the U.S. pop charts; although he stalled at second place a free concert to thank Korean citizens for their support was held in Seoul with government approval (Lim and Baek 2012). On October 4, 2012, 80,000 people gathered for the concert, funded with $400,000 from the Seoul City government and broadcast by both SBS, a Korean national commercial network, and the Youtube network, where it received 7 million views over three days. On
November 19th, 2012, just few months after Psy’s U.S. success, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism awarded Ok-Kwan cultural merit, one of the most prestigious awards in a cultural field, to the artist for his contribution to the global popularization of Korean culture.

This national response reveals that, although Psy was the first Korean entertainer to break into the U.S. scene, his achievement did not happen on a solely individual level; Koreans in South Korea and elsewhere had a collective reaction to the appeal of “Gangnam Style” in American pop culture. Why did an individual’s success become nationwide fever? Why did Koreans gather to celebrate his popularity in the U.S. market? Why does the Korean government care about an individual’s accomplishment, to the extent that it would enable and fund a personal celebration?

In this chapter, I argue that the collective response toward Psy’s success lies in how South Korea has built and branded its nation since the 1960s. In the fifty years following the Korean War, South Korea underwent massive, rapid changes—from several military dictatorships to a democratic government, and from being one of the world’s poor countries to establishing a leading and still rapidly growing economy—in a process termed “compressed modernity” (Chang 1999). Special attention will be paid to the third stage, nation branding, to explore how the most recent administrations (of Kim Dae-Jung, Roh Moo-Hyun, and Lee Myung-Bak) devised cultural policies to strategically overcome the economic uncertainty stemming from the 1997 financial crisis, which in turn led South Korea to become a post-industrial and consumer economy.

7 Although Korean American reaction toward Psy’s success was not as intense as that of Korean nationals, there was active discussion in the community concerning the U.S. media’s description of Psy as a ‘typical Asian male’, and how he was able to succeed in the U.S. market.
Through analyzing national and local newspapers and reports by government and private institutions, I will also detail how the conservative Lee Administration (2007-2012) explicitly presented their policies not only in South Korea but also New York City. The Lee Administration’s efforts became part of a broader narrative of a series of nation branding projects, including such actors as Korea-based transnational corporations, entertainment companies marketing Hallyu stars, media and even international and domestic scholars and research institutions. This chapter investigates how these actors positively or negatively contribute to top-down overseas policies on nation branding, and by extension traces a new way of selling a nation to the world.

The Three Stages of Economic and Political Development

South Korean governments have been engaged with cultural policies to control and regulate the citizens since independence (Lee 2009); such policies were most notably used during the military junta (1961-1979) (Oh 1995). Cultivating the arts and recreation was less critical than confronting economic issues due to the state of the economy under the Japanese Occupation (1910-1945) and during the Korean War (1950-1953); according to the Bank of Korea, the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1961 was only $2.1 billion. By the late 1980s, however, the Korean economy was growing rapidly, culminating in the infusion of capital for the 1988 Olympics in Seoul; the 1989 GDP was $236.3 billion. By 2014, the GDP had reached $
1,410 billion; often called the Miracle of Han River (Norton 1998; Chang 1999; Lee and Han 2006), this rapid economic growth was based on export-centered economic policies in post-war South Korea. South Korea’s market value thus increased hundred-fold in less than thirty years and almost two-hundred-fold in fifty years; the only exceptions to the steady growth followed years of financial crisis (1997 and 2007). Where the country had an extremely weak economy and relied heavily of food aid (particularly from the U.S.) post-war, South Korea had revived itself under new industrialization on the same level as its East Asian peers Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore (Vogel 1991).

This process of economic and political development since 1961 can be divided into three stages based on the type of economy, executive regime, and cultural policies: nation building, transition and nation branding. Although the Republic of Korea dates from 1948, when Syngman Rhee was elected President, I focus on the period commencing with the development of wide-ranging state-led policies by an authoritarian government. From 1961, the regimes governing South Korea intensely and rapidly developed the economy through aggressively executive policy, stressing export-oriented and labor-intensive industry driven by Chaebol, family-owned business conglomerates, and trade alliances (Scitovsky 1985; Kuznets 1988; Westphal 1990; Pomerleano 1998; Chang 1999; Claessens et al. 2000); this strategy is considered an ‘East Asian development model’.

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10 After the 1997 financial crisis--which affected most East Asian nations--South Korea’s GDP dramatically decreased, from $532.3 billion to $358.2 billion in 1998; the recovery was rapid, although the GDP remained below par at $461.6 billion in 1999. The world financial crisis of 2007 also brought down South Korea’s GDP, from $1 trillion to $930.9 billion in 2008, and fell even lower in 2009, to $834.4 billion (the Bank of Korea, [http://ecos.bok.or.kr](http://ecos.bok.or.kr)).
The first stage, nation building, refers to the period of successive authoritarian regimes with strong state-led economic policies and less political freedom. In this period, South Korea strategically developed export-oriented industry with cheap labor, but consumption was less valued as a market component. The second stage is a transitional period. Due to mass demonstration and the involvement of the Korean middle class, the military regimes were compelled to hold direct elections; however, this is often considered an unfinished democratization, as the candidate elected came from the ruling military party. This period was characterized by the advance of heavy and chemical industries, such as shipbuilding, automobile, petroleum refining, and electronics (Koo 1991:p.487), even as South Korea slowly moved toward a post-industrial consumer economy. The third stage, nation branding, followed the economic crisis of 1997. To overcome the crisis, the administrations in power during this time
strategically devised cultural policies to market the nation as a leading cultural entity throughout Asia.


**Park administration (1961-1979)**

South Korea’s fast economic growth is a well-known example of state intervention through policy reform (Amsden 1989; Westphal 1990; Krueger and Yoo 2002); these reforms became more prevalent during the succession of military regimes beginning in the 1960s. Park Chung-Hee and a group of military officials seized power in a 1961 coup; installed as Acting President in 1962 (and officially elected to the post in 1963), his regime (1961-1979) devised several tools legitimatizing the junta within the context of nation building. The policy was explicitly nationalist, stressing anti-Communism, military power, and national prosperity through modernization and industrialization (Chung 1993; Oh 1995; Brazinski 2007; Liem 2010; Lim 2012). The regime frequently impinged upon cultural freedom; valued culture less than economic development; actively utilized cultural products as propaganda (Brazinski 2007; Liem 2011); and limited the availability of consumer goods.

**Nation Building and Industrialization**

As a part of nation building project, the regime launched its first Five-Year Economic Plan in 1962. During the following Five-Year plans, all under direct market control by the military regime, the economic growth rate in South Korea rose quickly; the average economic growth rate during each of the Five-Year plans were 7.8% (1962-1996), 9.6% (1967-1971), 9.6%
Established in part to resolve a fiscal deficit due to the gradual decrease in U.S. economic aid since 1957 (Yoon 2006; Lee 2009), the impact of the junta’s plan was extraordinarily comprehensive, explicitly tying the legitimacy of the government through state-enabled economic growth (Park 1998; Lee 2009). The military regimes imposed a total of five Five-Year economic plans between 1962 and 1986; all advanced an export-oriented industry based on the exploitation of cheap labor, policies maintaining low agricultural prices, and state-Chaebol (large family-own conglomerate) alliances (Scitovsky 1985; Kuznets 1988; Westphal 1990; Pomerleano 1998; Chang 1999; Claessens et al 2000; Johnson et al. 2000; Kim 2010). The authoritarian government actively controlled the market mechanism through subsidy interventions distorting market prices (Jones and Sakong 1980; Deyo 1987; Amsden 1989; Wade 1990; Koo and Kim 1992; Park 1998) and the imposition of performance standards on private firms even as economic activity was promoted (Amsden 1989: p9). By passing the Illicit Wealth Accumulation Law in 1960 to enable the state to accuse owners of private firms of accumulating wealth illegally and either confiscated the property or received shares in the company (Jones and SaKong 1980; Amdsden 1989) and nationalizing the banks in 1961, the state established a basis for regulating financial and human capital and resources through investment (Amsden 1989: p72-73; Park 1998). Several fiscal and tax reforms followed in the 1960s (Krueger and Yoo 2002); notably, the Foreign Capital Inducement Act was amended in 1962 to encourage foreign investment by maintaining low interest rates and guaranteeing loans (Scitovsky 1985; Amsden 1989).
Prior to the first set of state reforms, South Korea’s imports outpaced its exports (Krueger and Yoo 2002). Policymakers encouraged the growth of an export economy through foreign exchange receipts, an export, interest, and tax subsidy (Krueger and Yoo 2002), and international loans (Scitovsky 1985; Collins and Park 1988). President Park’s annual message of 1964 reflected this new focus, invoking the British trade slogan “Export or Die” in the government motto: “Production Increase, Export, and Construction” (Kim 2013). National Export Day was declared on December 5, 1964 to celebrate reaching $100 million in exports for the first time in Korea’s history (Lee 2009).

The importance of South Korea’s manufacturing industry dates from these policies. Light industry such as clothes, shoes, and wigs, had developed in the early 1960s; however, investment in heavy industry gradually increased later in the decade, and received a significant boost from the government in the 1970s (Haggard and Moon 1993; Kim 1999). President Park again publicly announced this policy with a “Declaration on Heavy Industrialization” on January 12, 1973.11 Based on this economic structural change to heavy industry supported by the strong state, South Korea built a mass production society (Chung 1994); 80% of government investment in manufacturing was concentrated in the heavy and chemical industries between 1977 and 1979 (Haggard and Moon 1990).

*Chaebol,* family-owned business conglomerates, were particularly essential to--and benefited particularly from--this state investment. Although these companies received preferential incentives in the name of economic development, the driving factor in their

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11 National Archives of Korea (http://contents.archives.go.kr/next/content/listSubjectDescription.do?id=007346)
successes were collusive ties with the government and monopolization of domestic financial resources (Krugman 1994; Chang 1999). The Chaebol, such as Samsung and Hyundai, widened in scale during the Park regime (Amsden 1989; Park 1998; Krueger and Yoo 2002); their growth outpaced the nation’s economic growth. For example, the growth rate of the top 46 Chaebol averaged 22.8% between 1973 and 1978 (SaKong 1994: p61; Kim 1999). This trend accelerated in the 1970s as the government began to emphasize and bolster heavy industry in response to the global financial crisis in the early part of the decade (Haggard and Moon 1990; Kim 1999; Park 2009). By the late 1970s, the most profitable ten Chaebol in the field owned almost 40% of the country’s heavy industry (Kim 1999).

Korean society successfully industrialized and economically expanded within a short period of time. In this system in which economic growth was prioritized, workers’ rights and welfare often were sacrificed, and individuals’ quality of life and cultural opportunities tended to be overlooked in favor of national success (Shin 1999; Chang 1999).

During the Park junta administration, South Korean society embraced and thrift and labor ethics; “do work” was one of six codes of conduct declared by President Park (Park 1963; Shin 2005). Ultimately, low wages and economic hardship prevented most of the working and middle classes from becoming part of a consumer class (Shin 2005). The average household income largely went towards food consumption: in 1963, expenditures for food products accounted for 61.7% of total household consumption expenditures on average. As the economy and average income increased, more resources were available for consumption beyond food: while the expenditure for food accounted for 43.8% of household consumption in 1975 and 29.4% in 1986, (Chung 1994), expenditure on education and leisure and cultural activities slowly increased.
Although contemporary Korean consumer culture has its roots in the U.S. military occupation (1945-1948) the introduction of American products through food aid and the presence of U.S. armed forces during the Korean War (Kim 2008; Won 2008), Western pop, consumer products, and culture--especially from the U.S.--began to penetrate Koreans’ everyday lives during the Park regime in the 1960s and 70s, despite protective trade policies and limited cultural freedom. The Coca-Cola Company began investing in Korea in 1968, followed by PepsiCo in 1969 (Kim 2008).

*Cultural Policies and the Rise of Nationalism: Regulating the Citizens*

Although individual cultural freedom was strictly regulated, a basic administrative structure for cultural policies and related laws was established during the Park regime: the Ministry of Culture and Public Information in 1968; the Culture and Arts Promotion Act in 1972; and the Korean Culture and Arts Foundation in 1973 (Kim and Park 1998; Lim 2012). The first Five-Year Plan for Culture and Art Revival was enacted in 1974 to promote a new national culture; a few traditional cultural figures and institutions were selected as vehicles for building national identity and pride. Of the plan’s total budget (48.5 billion Korean won, approx. $44 million USD), 70.2% was utilized for projects establishing an officially sanctioned national historical narrative, while arts and mass culture received 12.2% and 8.9%, respectively, of the

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12 Not all traditional cultures were valued, as only a few could be successfully utilized to spread the government message to the populace. These were selected and rehabilitated as iconic figures; for instance, military historical figures received extraordinary praise, as they symbolized and contributed to a concept of patriotism justifying military power (Choi 2007).
culture-oriented expenditure (Oh 1998). In fact, in the 1960s and 70s, the budget for culture was a very small portion of the total government budget (Yoon and So 1998; Lee 2004).

Broadly, the authoritarian government implemented such cultural policies and related laws to catalyze modernization; however, in practice, such policies were used to control and regulate the citizens in accordance with the government’s interests, disempowering liberals and progressives by establishing a nationalist ideology containing implicit political justification for those in power. Cultural policies founded in an anti-Communist agenda were particularly relevant to social integration and economic reconstruction during the Rhee (1948-1960) and Park (1962-1979) Administrations.\textsuperscript{13}

Their political messages were sent directly to citizens through new media, with mass cultural products such as movies, cartoons and novels, used explicitly for propaganda purposes (Brazinski 2007; Kim 2007; Liem 2010; Chae 2011).\textsuperscript{14} According to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the budget for public information was 1.5 times higher than the budget for culture in the 1960s through 1971 (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism 2002). Radios and televisions became easily accessible over a short period; the government even organized the distribution of radios to rural areas (Choi and Kang 2001; Song 2011). The major radio

\textsuperscript{13} The Rhee Administration (1948-1960) built and embedded a dominant ideology in Korean life emphasizing Democracy, anti-Communism, and anti-Japanese sentiments as a counterweight to its closest neighbors: the Soviet Union and China--both of whom vaguely supported the North Korean Communist regime--and Japan (Liem 2011). Park’s anti-communist agenda, clearly evident in the junta’s pledge, was announced as national policy in 1961(Kim 1992).

\textsuperscript{14} According to Liem (2011) and Kim (2013), the U.S.’s intense propaganda effort through cultural policy-enacted by the United States Information Service and coordinated by the United States Information Agency--was intended to embed democracy and free economic systems as an alternative to its counterpart, the Soviet Union, for achieving a global hegemony (Liem 2011; Kim 2013).
organizations were operated by the government: KBS (Korean Broadcasting System), the first broadcasting company in South Korea, first aired on December 31, 1961; it was followed by DBS and RSB in 1963, and MBC in 1969. Television, widely diffused in the 1960s and ‘70s, was also an efficient medium for the authoritarian regime’s propaganda; indeed, the government celebrated the spread of television across the country as symbolic of the success of the regime’s modernization project (Lim 2004; Song 2011).

Such cultural policies strongly influenced the citizens, especially in the propagation of anti-communist and nationalistic sentiments (Oh 1998). The impact was particularly intense in the 1970s as the government heavily regulated the younger generation’s cultural expression, emphasizing obedience and regulation: the long hair (on men) and acoustic guitar music symbolic of the college culture and students’ movement (Oh 2012); hippie culture and counterculture, with their accompanying resistance messages (Kim 2008); miniskirts for women; and marijuana use were all strictly controlled or forbidden (Oh 1998).

Chun Doo-Hwan Administration (1980-1987)

Despite the Park Administration’s continuous repression of political freedoms and policies of ideological misinformation in the name of economic development, the democratization movements together with the student and labor movements were not halted. With the assassination of President Park by Kim Jae-Kyu, the director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency in 1979, democratization groups hoped for the demise of the Yushin system. However, the military dictatorship in South Korea was not destroyed; rather, the dismantling of
the Park regime engendered another period of political and economic turmoil for South Koreans between the late 1970s and the early 1980s.

Although South Korea achieved economic growth in the 1960s and 70s, the country faced economic stagnation in the late 1970s due to the second oil shock in 1979, rising interest rates, and shortages of customer goods and inflation (Haggard and Moon 1990). Several political events following Park’s assassination exacerbated the economic instability. The military, under the leadership of Major General Chun Doo-Hwan, seized power from the interim government of acting president Choi in a December 12, 1979 coup d'état and declared martial law in the most part of the nation. Following a second coup, on May 17, 1980, Chun extended martial law to the entire nation, largely to suppress demonstrations by college students and opposing political groups. The National Council for Unification ultimately selected Chun as a president on August 27, 1980.

The new military government devised new economic policies, including the reorganization of heavy and chemical industries, to differentiate itself from the previous administration and offer political justification for their rule by overcoming economic stagnation (Haggard and Moon 1990). Rather than the state-led policies of the Park Administration, the new junta pursued free market policies geared towards achieving economic stability (Kim 1995). Ironically, despite the lack of political legitimacy, the administration harshly denounced political corruption, and even instituted a “Social Purification Campaign” (Haggard and Moon 1990; Chung 2001); violent oppression by the state followed naturally from the military origins of the coup. Finally, the military emphasized the creation of a welfare state (Haggard and Moon 1990; Chung 2005) and increased investment in cultural promotion, including the construction of

In 1981, the administration enacted the Cultural Constitution and announced new policies aimed at the establishment of a cultural (national) identity, distribution of cultural welfare, promotion of creative cultural abilities, and systemic support for cultural activities. In 1983, the administration modified the Fifth Economic and Social Development Plan and announced cultural development as a core strategic project; the president declared that cultural opportunities should be equally distributed to all citizens regardless of location, class and age January 18, 1983 (Chung 2005). This goal was clarified in the Sixth Economic and Social Development Plan of 1986 (Kim and Park 1998; Chung 2005), in which the administration adopted ‘internationalization’: expanding on the 1983 partial liberalization of overseas travel, and in preparation for the ‘86 Asian Games and ‘88 Seoul Olympics, the government embraced Western culture, rather than restricting and regulating Koreans’ cultural consumption (Chung 1994; Kim and Park 1998).

Despite this attempted increase in cultural investment, particularly by building up cultural facilities and including cultural policy in long-term government plans, that investment was centered on increasing national subjectivity: such official concern with national culture was clearly a diversionary tactic, intended to distract from the political illegitimacy of the military junta and its repressive policies. Publicly promoted plans and policies rarely materialized in full due to budget constraints and a lack of support for the programs (Kim and Park 1998; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism 2002; Chung 2005). The cultural policies of the junta only
targeted Korean nationals within the country because they were purely a political ploy, just as in the previous administrations.

Stage 2: 87 Regime

In the 1980s, South Korea underwent another economic and political transformation: moving toward a postindustrial or consumer society--the society of media and spectacle, of multinational capitalism (Jameson 1986); and gradually transitioning to a liberalized civil society, later called the “87 Regime.” Although the Kwangju uprising in 1980 resulted in thousands of causalities and was publicly stigmatized as a communist riot--a cover-up that lasted decades--the popular aspiration to political liberalization never ceased. Indeed, the economic and political conditions of the 1980s favored liberalization: the Seoul Asian Games in 1986, 1987 Democracy Protest, the Great Labor Struggle of 1987, and the Seoul Olympics in 1988 all drew international attention, leading to both an opening-up of Korean policy and society and greater international scrutiny; the economic boom between 1986 and 1988 led a dramatic income increase, which both empowered more South Koreans and enabled their consumption of both domestic and international products (Kang 2005; Kim 2008; Won 2008).

Although nation branding had not yet reached South Korea, ‘internalization’ and ‘globalization’ became standard in government and business vocabulary during this time. I argue that this was a transitional period in the movement from nation building to nation branding, in which the Korean government, economy, and civil society prepared to move toward a post-industrial consumer and economically neo-liberal but politically democratic society (Randall Henning and Destler 1988).
Political Transition and a Direct Election

In January 1987, Chong-Chul Park, a college student at Seoul National University, died due to water and electrical torture during a police interrogation into his participation in the democracy movement. Although the police and government initially covered up the cause of Park’s death, the tragedy caused nationwide anger to erupt. The constantly simmering protests amplified immensely with the revelation of Park’s torture, and spread to other parts of the country. Nonetheless, Chun declared that he would suspend an ongoing debate with opposing parties on constitutional reform, and attempted on April 13 to transfer power to his military comrade Roh Tae-Woo, a chair of the ruling Democratic Justice Party. On June 10, 1987, thousands of college students protesting against police and government brutality and for constitutional reform were joined by middle-class citizens, later called the ‘necktie unit’, who sought direct elections and political freedom (Koo 1991); this protest went on through June 29.

The pro-democracy protests drew further international attention--already increased due to the ‘86 Asian Games and ‘88 Olympics--to Korea regarding human rights issues. Although the Chun Administration attempted invoked the specters of North Korea and Communism, and tried to divert attention to culture by implementing the ‘3s’ policy (screen, sex and sports), the international attention helped prevent the government from distracting the citizens from the democracy movement (Manheim 1990; Black and Bezanson 2004). On June 29, Roh Tae Woo announced that he would accept all demands by the opposition, including a direct election. President Chun accepted a plan for constitutional reform and pronounced amnesty for the leading opposing politician Kim Dae Jung. The democratization movement did not cease with the instituting of direct elections; indeed, Roh Tae-Woo was elected President because of the
opposition vote was divided between Kim Young-Sam and Kim Dae-Jung, both of who eventually served as Presidents. The working class continued to pursue unionization rights between July and September, during which 2 million workers participated in “the Great Labor Struggle in 1987.” About 3,300 labor disputes and strikes occurred, and 1,200 new unions were organized (Chae 2007; Shin 2011). Further liberalization came in the form of freedom of international travel in 1989. With the gradual liberalization of studying abroad during the 1980s and the economic boom in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a rapid increase in Korean tourists and students eager to visit Western countries.

**The Economic Boom and Beginnings of a Consumer Society**

With democratization and the labor struggle in the late 1980s, and the impact of the ‘86 Asian Games and ‘88 Olympics, the scale of the Korean economy grew considerably in the late 1980s (Manheim 1990). Several international economic conditions were also favorable for South Korea’s shift toward a post-industrial and consumer society. Three lows--low oil prices, low dollar values, and low interest rates--resulting from the Plaza Accords reached by the Group of Five (G5) in September 1985 (Henning and Destler 1988) were highly beneficial to the country, which heavily depended on oil imports, foreign capital, and commercial export; in particular, the consequent reduction in manufacturing cost led directly to the economic boom between 1986 and

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15 Before the Foreign Travel Liberalization Act, international travel for general citizens was limited to business trips, study abroad, and overseas employment; passports were not issued for travel. (Chang 2009)
1988 (Cho 1996). The Great Labor Struggle in 1987 was another turning point,\textsuperscript{16} as wage increases allowed working class Koreans to incorporate into the mass production and post-industrial mass consumer society. The urban middle class also grew (Koo 1991\textsuperscript{17}; Nam 2007).

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{income_structure.png}
\caption{Income Structure of Worker Households in Urban Areas: 1980-2007}
\end{figure}

Source: National Statistical Office, \textit{Family Income and Expenditure survey}
Note: USD-KRW: 1,142.5000 Price of 1 USD in KRW (Bloomberg) (July 5, 2013)

As seen in Figure 6, urban worker income reached five hundred thousand won (approximately $500) in 1987, and has rapidly has increased since then. With the expansion in consumer spending together with the average wage increase, the penetration rate of consumer

\textsuperscript{16} Major labor disputes and strikes had occurred in small- to medium-sized factories in light industry prior to the Great Labor Struggle; however, the struggle transformed South Korea’s labor movement, which became more militant, male-centered, and was particularly active in heavy industry (Koo 2002; Nam 2007).

\textsuperscript{17} Koo (1991) defines professional, managerial and clerical workers as the new urban middle class.
goods rose sharply: durable consumer goods were 90% of the supply rate in the late 1980s; the supply rate for automobiles also increased in the late 1980s and extended in the 1990s, reaching 58.2% in 2000 (Baek 2008); the television penetration rate per household reached 79.1% in 1979 and 99% in 1985 (Kim 2008).

In the post-Korean war period, American products such as Coca Cola, cigarettes, and whiskey symbolized the wealth available to a very few Koreans through PX (Post Exchange) at the U.S. military base camps (Kim 2008). However, imported products and American brands became more common among South Korean consumers in the late 1980s. Due to the economic transformation, many American mega corporations, particularly food companies, began to open their first outlets in Seoul in the 1980s: Burger King and KFC opened in 1984, Pizza Hut and Baskin-Robbins in 1985, and McDonald’s in 1988.

Due to international pressure over economic liberalization, particularly from the U.S. (Shin 2006), since the 1990s, Koreans who have been exposed to Western/American culture have learned to treat consumption as the satisfaction of desires rather than needs. Western ideas of brand value, style, design, and leisure have become crucial in Korean life, especially among the generation in their 20s and 30s (Won 2008). In the 1990s, Korean media devoted attention to the new consumer generation, called the ‘New Generation’ in Korea, born roughly between 1965 and 1976 (Lee 1994; Park 1995; Chun and Choi 1996; Kim and Hur 2007; Kim 2008). This generation was seen to characterize themselves as individualistic, anti-authoritarian, and consumption- and image-oriented (Kim and Hur 2007; Kim 2008). Where earlier generations’ lifestyles and cultural experiences were limited by the Korean War and its consequences--leading to the embrace of frugality and negative perception of consumerism--this new generation was
able to express a cultural identity defined in part and greatly benefiting from the economic boom in the late 1980s (Joo 1994).

*Segyehwa (or Globalization): Does Seoul Go Global?*

In the post-1987 regime, South Koreans had expanded cultural opportunities. The transformation of the consumer landscape was paralleled by the Foreign Travel Liberalization Act in 1989 and the gradual increase in overseas study. In this period, the Roh administration began to use the terms “internalization” and “globalization” in regard to Korean culture, despite the lack of real government support for policies favoring internalization. The administration did inaugurate international projects aimed at the global popularization of Korean culture, such as the publication of brochures introducing Korean culture to outsiders and exhibitions of cultural assets abroad (Bureau of Public Information 1992; p392; Chung 1994; 2005).

The following administration, under Kim Young-Sam (1993-1998), devised policies on *Segyehwa*, a public slogan for globalization. Although the use of ‘globalization’ in Western countries generally refers to economic policy favoring flexible and decentralized systems (Friedmann 1986; Scott 1988; Harvey 1989; Sassen 2001), *Segyehwa* was used more broadly (Chun 2004; Shin 2006). After attending an APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) meeting in Sydney on November 17, 1994, President Kim announced an increased government interest in *Segyewha* due to rapid global changes.\(^{18}\) *Segyewha* translates to “Go global,” indicating broad institutional and attitude changes in regard to a globalized world. Koreans were asked to be good

global citizens by increasing the country’s competitiveness in public policy, education, industry, finance and labor in international markets. Television broadcasting companies scheduled programs introducing new global cultures and tourist spots; scholars adopted the slogan, bringing the topic to the forefront of academia due to a series of conferences funded by the government (Shin 2006).

Although the meaning of ‘globalization’ was altered by the president and his administration, the Korean government was aware of the importance of the global market and global circuit of culture. “The most Korean is the most global” was frequently used by the president even before the APEC meeting, that slogan emphasizing the Korean-ness, tradition, and national identity that he expected the country to bring to a globalized context--and the global market (Jung-ang Ilbo 1994). A Globalization Committee was organized under the control of Prime Minister on January 25, 1995, as President Kim announced his plans for the globalization of education (through educational reform and the realization of a lifelong learning society), law, economy, order, politics, the media, public administration and local government, environment, and culture (Yonhapnews 1995). For President Kim, globalization meant social reform for the building of a transparent society, based on the value of free market competition.

South Korea finally joined the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) on December 12, 1996, despite disagreement from the opposing parties. The Korean media did not hesitate to praise the government’s achievement, presenting South Korea as having finally stepped forward as a developed country no longer tied to the North/South division of the Korean War or U.S. aid. Succeeding cultural policies were likewise related to Segyewha, with moves towards extending quality of life to the assumed level of Western
countries; these were termed the “globalization of quality of life” (Chung 2005; Suh et al. 2011; Jang et al. 2012).

Stage 3: An era of Nation Branding in post-Financial Crisis in 1997

South Koreans, caught up in a rosy promise that the country would soon become fiscally self-sustaining after joining OECD, suddenly had to face economic uncertainty towards the end of 1997: triggered by a series of financial crises in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines; exacerbated by the newness of economic liberalization policies leading to the deregulation of finance and reduction of the state’s economic role; \(^{19}\) and complete with a $60 billion bailout from the I.M.F. Although there were earlier signs of the crisis--particularly the bankruptcies of Hanbo, South Korea’s eleventh largest Chaebol, in January and KIA, the eighth largest Chaebol, in July--the South Korean government was not prepared for the economic collapse.

International pressure for market liberalization, privatization, and deregulation was strongly supported by the highly influential Chaebol (Amsden 1994; Shin and Chang 2003; The globalization of financial market is treated as a market driven phenomenon, states still play a role in the process of globalization (Helleiner 1995). Financial liberalization was facilitated by the Korea-U.S. Financial Policy Talks between 1990-92, in which South Korea embraced the interests of the (George H.W.) Bush Administration to gain their support for Korea’s entry into the OECD; President Clinton appealed for financial liberalization as well during his visit to Seoul in 1993 (Chang 2013). The weakening of state power due to democratization in the late 1980s had allowed the Chaebol to gain increased political influence (Chang 2013), which it used to push for financial globalization and economic liberalization before the financial crisis. The political prominence of the founder of Hyundai chaebol, Chung Ju-yung (1915-2001)--who was the third favorite candidate for 1992 presidential election, following Kim Young-Sam and Kim Dae-Jung--reflected Korean society’s favoring of the economic sector during the liberalized economic development process (Chang 2013).

\(^{19}\)Although the globalization of financial market is treated as a market driven phenomenon, states still play a role in the process of globalization (Helleiner 1995). Financial liberalization was facilitated by the Korea-U.S. Financial Policy Talks between 1990-92, in which South Korea embraced the interests of the (George H.W.) Bush Administration to gain their support for Korea’s entry into the OECD; President Clinton appealed for financial liberalization as well during his visit to Seoul in 1993 (Chang 2013). The weakening of state power due to democratization in the late 1980s had allowed the Chaebol to gain increased political influence (Chang 2013), which it used to push for financial globalization and economic liberalization before the financial crisis. The political prominence of the founder of Hyundai chaebol, Chung Ju-yung (1915-2001)--who was the third favorite candidate for 1992 presidential election, following Kim Young-Sam and Kim Dae-Jung--reflected Korean society’s favoring of the economic sector during the liberalized economic development process (Chang 2013).
The longstanding alliance between the government and *Chaebol*, and the ensuing corruption, highlighted the failure of the liberalized market mechanism; such financial liberalization was a key cause of increasing foreign debt, particularly in the *Chaebol*’s short-term debt from foreign banks (Chang and Shin 2003; Shim 2011).

South Korea under the IMF bailout program had to undergo radical economic restructuring. Many scholars perceived this as a sign of the demise of the East Asian development model (Park 2003, 2007; Park, Jang and Lee 2007; Chang 2013). According to Shin and Chang (2003; p.54-55), the IMF economic restructuring program for Korea had three broad components: 1) macroeconomic retrenchment through high interest rates and tight budgetary policy; 2) market opening, reinforcing the liberalization of products and finance and abolishing trade-related subsidies; and 3) structural reform of the financial, corporate, labor, and public sectors, to emphasize economic efficiency and market ability.21 This reflected the standard of the U.S. system, embedding an American model in South Korea (Shin and Chang 2003; Lee 2011). The IMF was referred to as “I aM Fired” or “I aM Fined” by the local media (Song 1998), in response to the high unemployment rate and preponderance of fines for civil offences. To boost

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20 The economic minister, Kang Kyung-Shik, insisted on allowing the market mechanism to revamp itself, rather than injecting public funds, when KIA Motors failed (Shin and Chang 2003). However, in 2005 Roh Hoe-Chan, a progressive politician, revealed that Samsung, the second largest *Chaebol* during the ‘97 crisis, had bribed policy makers (including Kang Kyung-Shik) to facilitate their merger with KIA Motors.

21 In financial sector, the IMF requested South Korea to apply the BIS (Bank for International Settlements) capital adequacy ratio and introduce forward looking criteria (FLC). And unviable commercial banks and non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) were forced to close or merge. In corporate sector, *Chaebols* were targeted to reduce their debts, which they had deeply relied on their investment (Chang 2013), while increasing flexibility was enhanced in labor sector, which later caused mass unemployment. Even in public sector, privatization of public enterprises was coerced, benchmarking the US system (Shin and Chang 2003: p54-55).
domestic consumption, credit cards were issued indiscriminately, and Koreans already were in
debt became trapped in the cycle of credit card debt. The suicide rate increased during the crisis,
and South Korean society became increasingly economically polarized.

The newly elected president, Dae-jung Kim, a dissident, and his administration believed
that South Korea would achieve both economic liberalization and political democracy at the
same time (Lee 2011). Not only did South Korea follow the IMF reform policies, it also now had
to seek alternatives for paying back the bailout from IMF and revamping the economy. Rather
than stepping in as the main actor, the government took the role of facilitator for the new global
order in implementing IMF policies (Lee 2011; Nye 2005). IT and cultural content industries
were particularly targeted for national investment.

While it may seem that national identity is blurred by the physical and cultural mobilities
of an economically liberalized global society, the nation and its meanings may also be reinforced.
This is particularly true in the context of nation branding in a globalized world (Aronczyk 2008;
Anholt 2011). In the following section, I analyze how the three most recent administrations, post-
‘97 crisis, actively utilized the meaning of nation and nationalism in a new economic order, as a
facilitator of the new global order rather than a strong state. For, while the ‘97 IMF bailout
spurred the incorporation of the nation to a neo-liberal global order, the nation itself remained an
important social, political and cultural rhetorical symbol for social integration, both within the
nation and as a strategy to maintain global competitiveness through nation branding efforts.
Figure 7 briefly summarizes government branding efforts, with symbols and new core industries strategically developed after the 1997 crisis. The liberal Kim Administration built the foundation for soft power policies, which accelerated around the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup. The succeeding Roh Administration developed these nation branding policies, instituting several projects on nation branding under the slogan “Dynamic Korea.” The conservative Lee Administration sought to differentiate itself from its liberal predecessors, but continued to capitalize on nation branding under the new slogan “Korea Be Inspired.” President Lee established a Presidential Council on Nation Branding, under the President's direct control. Although branding efforts in transnational flows were implemented in each administration to a different degree, they shared the message of marketing the nation for social integration and international competition; branding the nation had become the signal form of “soft power” (Nye 2005; Centeno, Bandelj, and Wherry 2011; Aronczyk 2013).
As television news constantly showed deputy prime minister for economic affairs Lim Chang-Yuel with Michel Camdessus, a Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) signing the agreement on financial reform, Koreans--particularly those who experienced the economic boom of earlier years--mourned the country’s failure. December 3, 1997, was declared the second national humiliation day. The media reported how the financial crisis would impact daily life, complete with images of crying and desperate Koreans. However, with the message that Koreans would survive this crisis as they had the Japanese Occupation and Korean War, Korean citizens collectively embraced the hope that “we” Koreans can overcome the nation’s bankruptcy “together.” This attitude strongly supported by the state, businesses, and non-profit organizations, and promoted in a series of nationalistic and patriotic campaigns and a series of public advertisements (Park, Jang and Lee 2007; Park 2007).

Among these was a “gold collection campaign.” Occurring sporadically among several groups, including the Supreme Prosecutors’ Office and grassroots organizations, after the government announced the bailout, this campaign caught a national attention with an emotional news report by KBS (Korea Broadcasting System) in which citizens were urged to donate gold to the national treasury. The idea was simple: a lack of foreign currency could be paid off by purchasing gold from ordinary citizens at a cheaper price and subsequently exporting a large stock of gold. The official campaign kicked off on January 5; citizens waited for hours in lines at collection stations to donate as wedding rings, medals, trophies, and good luck keys traditionally

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22 Koreans memorialize the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1910, also known as the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty, as the most humiliating moment in modern Korean history.
given for 60th birthdays. 3,320 kg of gold was gathered by 45,028 citizens on the first day (Kim et al. 2004); by the second day of the campaign, 10 tons of gold had been collected. Even the president-elect, Kim Dae-Jung, donated 398 grams of his personal gold, as he called for upper and upper-middle class Koreans to participate. The campaign lasted for three months, netting 227 tons of gold; 3,510,000 citizens participated, both those in the country and those living internationally.

Public advertisements sponsored by the government and private companies likewise promoted similar attitudes toward overcoming the fiscal crisis. In 1998, the media regularly aired scenes of the golfer Se-ri Pak winning the U.S. Women’s Open with a memorable shot in her bare feet; after her ball landed in the sloped rough alongside the river, Pak took off her shoes and socks and went into the river to continue playing. The Office of Public Information used this image with a song whose lyrics included, “we will eventually win, although the journey is long and hard.” Such nationalistic rhetoric was highly effective as political ideology, as was the imagery of a Korean overcoming racial barriers in a Western- and White-dominated sport (Cho 2008).

Positive Images and New Industries: How Korea Market Itself to the World

Such examples of Korean success even in difficult circumstances were in line with the new administration’s launch of projects for the spread of positive national images. On August 15, 1998, the 53rd anniversary of independence from Japan and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Republic of Korea, the President announced “the Second Founding of the Nation” and the establishment of the National Commission for Rebuilding Korea for social and
administrative reforms (Kukjung Shinmun 1998); six societal shifts were suggested: from authoritarianism to participatory democracy; strong state regulation to market autonomy; nationalism to cosmopolitanism; heavy industry to information-based society; stratification to social integration; and an emphasis on exchange between North Korea and South Korea. The “New Korea” envisioned in this project emphasized the future economic importance of tourism, IT, and cultural industry; while these had not yet brought much revenue for South Korea, the government strategically invested and promoted those industries to create more jobs and market itself in a different way. Figure 8 frames the nation-rebuilding efforts centering on the promotion of new industries.

**Figure 8. Nation Rebuilding and New Industries**

To create a more knowledge-driven economy, Kim administration devised two broad policies in 1999: Cyber Korea 21 and e-Korea Vision 2006. Cyber Korea 21 (1999-2001) aimed to build an IT infrastructure, particularly a more advanced broadband telecommunications network, on the grounds of achieving productivity and transparency in government, business,
and individuals; providing new business opportunities; and exporting telecommunications products and services (Ministry of Information and Communication of Republic of Korea 1999; Im and Seo 2005; Shin 2007). E-Korea Vision 2006 (2002-2006) qualitatively advanced on this model (Kim and Choi 2005): by investing in an IT industry, the Kim Administration argued, not only could Korean society move toward more a high-tech society, but, more immediately, new jobs would be created (Choi and Kim 2005; Im and Seo 2005). Venture businesses were strategically fostered with government business loans, legislative amendments to encourage stable long-term financing for small-medium size enterprises, and tax benefits; these policies strongly resemble those that enabled Silicon Valley’s success (Yang, Joo and Cho 1998; Kang and Oh 2003). Venture booms from the late 1990s to the early 2000 drove labor market participation of the highly educated unemployed during the crisis (Chang 2005), and promoted an image of a technologically advanced nation.

The lack of a significant tourism industry in Korea was a longstanding problem, due to perceived political instability triggered by the South-North division and lack of tourism infrastructure. Koreans did not consider tourism a viable source of revenue; however, the Kim Administration began to foster tourism as a means of job creation and economic growth. In 1998, President Kim, together with celebrities, made the first presidential appearance in a public television advertisement to attract foreign tourists. Holding a Cheongsachorong, a traditional Korean lantern, the President stated that “Korea is changing. Come and meet the new Korea.” The advertisement was made not only to entice foreign tourists but also to market the nation with a positive image: Korea is evolving, so come, visit and invest us. Two tourism policies were implemented in preparation for a series of national events--ASEM 2000 (Asia-Europe Meeting),

Tourism Vision 21, a five-year plan (1999-2003), was devised in 1999 to develop Korea as a Northeast Asian tour hub, induce foreign and domestic investment, advance the information-based tourism industry, and promote domestic tourism among Koreans (OECD 2002). The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Korea National Tourism Organization, Korea Tourism Research Institute and local governments were involved in the tourism promotion; financial aid came from the national government, with a significant increase in the tourism budget between 1997 and 2002 (942%, according to the OECD; OECD 2002); and tour infrastructure was built at a heavy rate.

Cultural industry was likewise promoted by the government, particularly targeting the Asian market. Since the 1970s, especially during the military dictatorships, cultural industry in South Korea had been strongly regulated by the government. Foreign investment in the Korean broadcasting industry was regulated by the government in the 1990s, and similarly constraining censorship prevailed in the national media (Kim 2011). However, the popularity of Korean pop culture in Asia and the liberal administration of Kim Dae-Jung (1998-2003) was a turning point, as the government shifted cultural policy from regulation to investment. Hallyu was a term originated by Kim Yoonho, a president of the Beijing branch of Ujun Soft, who produced a weekly radio program at FM 97.4 Beijing Music Radio called “Seoul Music Hall” that played Korean pop music for an hour (Kim 1996); as the term was spread by the Chinese media in the
late 1990s (Jang 2011), it came to refer to the popularity and economic success of Korean pop culture in East and South Asia. This popularity is known not only for its market success, but also for the role of the government in its production since the early 2000s. In 1999, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism distributed free CDs with Korean pop music to broadcasting companies, magazines, universities, and overseas consulates of Republic of Korea (Kim 2005; Kim 2010).

Like other nation branding strategies, *Hallyu* was promoted to export products with cultural content—music, drama, games, movies—as well as to drive indirect benefits, such as sales on tie-in products and exposure of Korean brands to international consumers (Ko et al 2005; Kim 2012). The promotion of cultural industry was expected by the government to positively impact the nation’s international image as a cultural frontier (Roh 2000; Yoo and Lee 2001; Hur 2002; Han 2005). However, some criticism holds that the industrial effects were often exaggerated and used for government PR (Lee 2005; Kim 2012).

**The Emergence of Nation Branding in South Korea**

The Korean government intentionally and strategically fostered new industries to revamp its image and finances; by all accounts, this was a successful strategy, as the IMF bailout was repaid in three years and eight months, on August 23, 2001. Although the newly elected president and his administration had not used the term ‘nation branding’ until 2001, a year before the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup, the administration often pointed out how Korean society should be positively depicted in other nations. In order to improve the nation’s image and manage nation

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23 There is no clear consensus on the origin of the term. Jang and Lee argue that it was first used by the Chinese media (Jang 2011). However, various Korean local media have labeled Kim Yoon-ho, a producer who introduced Korean music in Beijing, as the coiner of *Hallyu*.
branding, several projects were devised. Totally New Korea (TNK), aimed at promoting Korea as a strong brand by 2010, was organized by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy, Government Information Agency, Korea Branding Association, and Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA). The concern addressed in this project surrounded the disjunction between Korea’s large economy and its lack of any international perception as a cultural power (Nye 2005). A CEO from Samsung noted in the interview that the company did not promote their products as “made in Korea,” due to the devalued perception of Korean products stemming from the production of cheap but unremarkable products in the 1970s (Park 2001).

The 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup offered momentum not only for the South Korean government to actively engage in branding efforts but also for South Koreans to participate in nation branding efforts from bottom-up. During the 2002 World Cup preparation, there was an increasing discussion on how Korea could shed its image of financial crisis through the sports event. The main concern was how to portray Korea as a young and dynamic nation, separating itself from the negative image of Korea Discount and Land of Morning Calm (Mae-Il Economy 2001). Although the main export industries in Korea were high-tech--semiconductors, automobiles, mobile communications--the national image lagged behind that reality. A survey in 2001 yielded “Dynamic Korea” as an umbrella slogan linking Upgrade Korea and Hub of Asia (Seoul Economy 2001/12/31). “Dynamic Korea” synthesized the goals of export promotion and an increase in foreign investment through IT, tourism and culture under the one slogan (Arregle, Beamish and Hebert 2009). Nam-gung Jin, of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, said that the administration planned to promote the 2002 World Cup as culture World Cup, tourism World Cup and IT Korea with biotechnology and cultural products (Moon 2001).
Bottom-up participation seemed to be successful. During the World Cup, street cheering caught international attention. For South Koreans, soccer was not just a sport, but how Koreans united and expressed national identity and pride as Koreans. Chanting the nation’s name, “Dae-han-min-kuk,” and wearing red T-shirts with the logo, “Be the Reds” (Kim and Morrsion 2005; Kim, Gursoy and Lee 2006), 7 million Koreans were reported to cheer on the streets during the June 25th semifinal against Germany (Kwon 2002). Such activity was nation building (branding) from bottom-up (Cho 2002), as street cheering became a symbol of the nation’s passion--which in turn benefitted the national brand.

The government did not miss this new phenomenon. Post-World Cup projects were soon introduced. On June 19th, at a meeting with CEOs of big corporations, President asked that the government and business sector work together in order to maximize the phenomenon (Ahn 2002) through exposure and exportation. A similar announcement was made public during the semifinal (Kim and Kim 2002). Although the Korean Information Service (KIS), Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy had been engaged in public relations, the Committee on Nation Image Improvement was established under the control of the Prime Minister on July 2, 2002, comprised of ten highly ranked government officials and ten civilian members tasked with promoting the slogans ‘Creative Korea’, ‘Friendly Korea’, and ‘Bright Korea’ (Yeom 2003). The sports World Cup would thus be transformed into an economic world cup (Seoul Economy 2002/05/07), a policy protocol continued by President Roh Mu-Hyun in 2003.
**Ripening new industries and brand the nation (2003-2008)**

With a very close margin of victory in the presidential election, Roh Moo-Hyun, a former human rights lawyer and Congressperson who served in Kim’s cabinet, took office in 2003. Strongly supported by the generations in their 20s, 30s and 40s, and by civil society groups, his win meant a generational change in Korean politics. Younger politicians, largely student activists in the 1980s against military regimes, and civil rights activists took over the congress. The support from President Kim also meant a continuation and extension of the Kim Administration’s policies; economic and nation branding policies were no exception.

Like Kim’s ‘DJnomics’ -- a combination of President Kim’s nickname, DJ (for Dae-Jung) and economics -- which argued for the development of both democracy and economic liberalism, the Roh Administration sought a balance between economic growth and distribution. Having emphasized social integration, national integration and balanced development, particularly regional, the Roh Administration ironically insisted on nationwide policies for enterprise and neo-liberal market reform (Lee 2003; Kim 2005).\(^{24}\) Transitioning to an innovation-driven economy and win-win growth were the main concerns in industrial policies (Kim and Kim 2008; Park 2009). ‘Innovation’ was the key word: technical innovation, system innovation, cultural innovation. Roh emphasized science and technology, with a special focus on biotechnology as “next-generation growth engines.”\(^{25}\)

\(^{24}\) His policies were later criticized by progressives as neo-liberal. Although the Roh Administration claimed progressive values, highlighting participation, autonomy and decentralization of power, his economic policies fell in line with his predecessor’s (Park 2009).

\(^{25}\)The Kim Administration had announced plans for the improvement of science and technology in six areas: IT (Information Technology), BT (Biotechnology), NT (Nanotechnology), ST (Space Technology), ET (Environment Technology) and CT (Culture Technology).
The administration endeavored to remake the negative image of cheap and low-quality products “made in Korea” with the high-tech industry. As shown in Figure 9, the “Dynamic Korea” slogan was more effectively materialized and intensified to support science and technology and cultural industry. The government sponsored “Dynamic Korea” in 2003 through advertising, extended it as a public campaign in 2005, and used its logo during domestic and international events in 2006 (GIA 2007). The slogan characterizes a partnership of government agencies, business sectors, research institutes, and academia.

Academics discussed post World Cup phenomenon, soft power and cultural industry; government sponsored academic institutions were actively engaged in this discourse. The Institute for Industrial Policy Studies (IIPS), a think-tank institution of Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy, kicked off the Korean Brand Conference in 2002 as well as the annual survey on nation’s image; foreign scholars, such as a French neo-liberal economist Guy Sorman, were often invited to the government-organized academic conferences on economic growth and nation branding to support market privatization; the government planned to open a graduate
school focused on cultural industry and technology at KAIST\(^{26}\); KAIST finally established the Graduate School of Culture Technology sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2005.

The post-World Cup projects were reinforced by stressing the importance of foreign investment. President Roh made his first foreign visit to the United States for a summit meeting with President Bush on May 11, 2003. In addition to the perennial issues of nuclear arms, conflict with North Korea, and reinforcement of the South Korea-U.S. military alliance, Roh also sought to enhance commercial ties and economic cooperation between the two nations. As the visit was “sale diplomacy,” 31 business leaders, including CEOs from Samsung and LG, accompanied the president (Cho 2003); likewise, Roh and the business leaders met with their Wall Street counterparts to encourage investment in Korea and emphasize the administration’s intent to build the basis for an appropriate market system (Hahm 2003). Roh thus encouraged foreign investment by branding the nation as more market friendly and technically advanced, confirming his Administration’s desire to follow an Anglo-American neo-liberal path of deregulation and market privatization (Park 2010),\(^{27}\) facilitating financialization but at the same time investing in itself (Porter 2001).\(^{28}\)

\(^{26}\) Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology, one of the top public research universities, sponsored by public funds.

\(^{27}\) According to Park (2010), percentages of foreign investment at major businesses have quickly risen. In 2006, foreign shares in stocks of Samsung Electronics, SK Telecom, KT, POSCO, Kookmin Bank and Shinhan Banks reached more than 50%. However, increasing investment by private equity and hedge funds has magnified M&A and led to liquidations causing numerous lay-offs (Park 2010).

\(^{28}\) According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare (2008), the government had increased expenditure on social security even while opening the market. In 1998, 6.1% of the total government budget was allocated to social security, yet the figure steadily increased to 7.3% in
Science-Technology and Nation Branding

South Korea is a leading nation in the IT industry. According to ITU (International Telecommunication Union), South Korea ranked third in 2002 on the ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) Development Index and second in 2007, the last year of the Roh Administration (ITU 2009). Broadband and CDMA services comprised 15.8% of the GDP in 2005 (Song 2006; Campbell and Im 2012). This success pivoted on investment and special policies by the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) since the mid-1990s; intensive investment in R&D, particularly in new industries, by the government and Chaebols; and the computerized government system, “e-Government,” in place during the Kim and Roh Administrations (Oh and Lee 2005; Campbell and Im 2012).

The key policy enriching Korea’s IT industry is IT 839. The IT 839 master plan, launched in 2004, highlighted eight services, three infrastructure plans, and nine product categories (Oh and Larson 2011). Two years later, IT 839 was revised as u-IT839 (Ubiquitous IT839) to further push the information-based economy forward (European Commission and e-Business Watch 2009), and finally to achieve the world’s first ubiquitous society (Oh and Larson 2011). Mobile technologies, including Samsung and LG, were key for Korea’s commercial success in a global IT market. As “next-generation growth engines” and a part of R&D investment, the Roh administration aggressively invested in the biotech industry. The administration planned to invest approximately two hundred million dollars annually between 2006 and 2010. By developing about 20 globally recognized products by 2010, the administration aimed to increase Korea’s

1999, and to 9.1%, 10.8%, 9.7%, 9.8%, 10.7%, 10.1%, 10.3%, and 12.0% in each of the following years through 2007.
biotech industry ranking among global competitors from being in the top fourteen in 2004 to the top seven in 2010. Through this investment, Korea was expected to reach about ten billion dollars in exports (Choi et al 2005).

In addition to investing in R&D and infrastructure, the government continued with nation branding efforts. During APEC summit in Busan in 2006, the government marketed Korea as an IT nation under the slogan “IT Korea.” The Ministry of Information and Communication played a critical role, having worked with Samsung, LG and KT, etc., to demonstrate new technology and showcase high-tech products (Lee 2005). In an interview, Chin Dae-Je, of the Ministry of Information and Communication, said that, “APEC, a cooperative body for common prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region, is aimed at liberalizing and activating trade investment, as well as seeking cooperation in the economic technology sector.” (Korea IT Times 2005)

Cultural Products and Branding Korean Culture

In 2004, Chang-Dong Lee, of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 29 announced a mid-to-long-term cultural policy, “Creative Korea,” and the New Art Policy. In a 700-page report, the “Creative Korea” put forth its plans for promoting cultural creativity among citizens through education, as the basis of a multicultural society (Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2004). Rather than focusing on cultural industry itself, the new plan underscored the spread of cultural expression across all strata of society.

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29 He is also a leading film director, screenwriter and novelist, widely known for writing and directing Poetry, which won the Best Screenplay Award at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival.
If Creative Korea is a more philosophical and broad approach, C Korea 2010, announced in the following year by Dong-Chae Chung, emphasized cultural industry and products. C Korea 2010 straightforwardly called for the promotion of culture, tourism and leisure, based on 3 Cs: Content, Creativity, and Culture—with a goal of $30,000 USD per capita gross national income (GNI) (Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2005; Won 2008). President Roh endorsed the policy by connecting the culture industry to Koreans’ quality of life and job creation (Sohn 2005):

“Culture, tourism and leisure sports industries could be an answer for various economic issues that our nation has faced. Our economic scale has grown, but it is not accompanied by job creation. As a president, I will pay a particular attention to and support these industries that play an important role in job creation and policies on income distribution. .. The development of cultural industry should be linked to the happiness for citizens and the promotion of welfare.”
- President Roh in Pyong-chang, South Korea

The administration established four core tasks: cultural market promotion, improvement of the distribution structure, reinforcement of copyright protection, and enhancement of national branding power through the global market, specifically in extending beyond the Asian market. The main content industries were targeted for promotion through an increased budget allocation in 2005.

Gathered momentum, combined with cultural influence and content, is among the most profitable recent exports. As shown by the data in Figure 10, total export from the cultural content industry steadily increased during the Roh administration, building a basis for further development in following administrations.
Figure 10. Total Export on Cultural Contents Industry

Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2005-2011), *Statistics on Contents Industry*

Figure 11. Export on Cultural Contents Industry by Items

*Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2005-2011)*
Games have created the most revenue by far for Korea, as shown in Figure 2-6; its synergizing of technology and cultural content is in line with administration strategy. The online and mobile gaming industry has grown dramatically since the early 2000s with the development of IT infrastructure; South Korea is a leading exporter of games, ranked first in online gaming and second in mobile gaming for 2003. Korea created the professional game league, first founding professional game teams in 2000; World Cyber Games Inc., with Samsung as a sponsor, has held an international competitive e-sports event of the same name since 2001 (SERI 2004). The Ministry of Culture and Tourism further promoted the industry by establishing the Game Industry Team in 2007 (Kwon and Kim 2014).

Games are a single specific product for promotion; another tactic taken by the administration is to promote a broader collection of cultural products in a single concept. Korean companies, including cosmetics, fashion items and electronics have become popular in China and Vietnam through product placement in various Hallyu content (KOTRA 2005; Goh, Lee and Kang 2005). The popularity of Korean TV dramas in Japan, China and Hong Kong, attracts Hallyu consumers to Korea for travel; a particularly successful Hallyu-related marketing attempt is the popularity of Korean food in Asia due to the traditional Korean food drama, “the Great Jang Geum,” first broadcasted in Korea in 2003 and later exported to 60 countries (including Iran, Turkey, Zimbabwe and Rwanda) (Pyo and Kim 2009).

As shown in Figure 12, the budget on cultural content dramatically increased between 1998 and 1999, and has steadily risen since. Even when considering overall budget decreases, the percentage of budget for cultural products shows significant investment by the Roh Administration.
Figure 12. Budget on Cultural Content

![Budget on Cultural Content]

Figure 13. Percentage of Cultural Content by Total Budget

![Percentage of Cultural Content by Total Budget]
Cultural industries, rather than culture itself or arts, were espoused as resources for national revenue, encouraging government investment in marketizing and industrializing the culture (Lim 2004; Lee 2007; Won 2008) under the nation branding strategy, “Dynamic Korea”.

**Dynamic Korea and Sub Slogans**

Although the liberal administrations of Kim and Roh recognized, underlined, and invested in the importance of nation branding, their strategies and slogans were not integrated into the umbrella slogan “Dynamic Korea.” Diverse government agencies--the Committee on Nation Image Improvement, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Korean Tourism Organization, KOTRA, and KOICA--proposed branding strategies. For instance, in addition to promotion of popular culture, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism kicked off a project to commercialize traditional culture, called “Han brands” or later “Han Style”. Categorizing traditional culture into six categories--Hangeul (language), Hansik (food)\(^{30}\), Hanbok (cloth), Hanji (paper), Hanok (house), and Hanguk-eumak (Korean Traditional Music)--was essentially a way of rebranding traditional culture, with the expectation that these traditions, newly connected to modern culture, could also act as a source of cultural product profit. Han Brands became a basis for the key Korean food projects in the following administration. The success of “The Great Jang Geum” was part of this effort, as was the Korean restaurant project, which sought to follow the success of Try Japan’s Good Food and Global Thai Restaurant by establishing Korean restaurants at, for instance, international airports (Lee 2007).

\(^{30}\)Although Lee administration kicked off the food project by establishing Korean Food Foundation, it was Roh administration that target non-Koreans to popularize Korean food by benchmarking Thai global project. I will discuss more details on food project on chapter 3.
This latter project was bankrolled by a 2007 Ministry investment of $250 million to promote and commercialize Korean food and language (Kwon 2007); the Sejong Institute sought to establish a market for the Korean language abroad à la the British Council, Goethe Institute and Alliance Française.

**Figure 14. Logos on Nation branding**

In March 2007, during the last year of the Roh’s presidency, the Korean Tourism Organization introduced a slogan promoting tourism, based on a survey among tourism experts in nine countries and potential foreign tourists in seventeen countries; “Korea, Sparkling” was meant to convey the revitalization and freshness of the country, and symbolize its interconnection of tradition and highly advanced modernism. With domestic and international experts such as Simon Anholt participating in the process of brand making, the organization planned to promote the national brand in major cities, such as Tokyo, Beijing, New York and London. The marketing budget increased to $22 million (22.5 billion won), producing television commercials promoting tourism that were seen on major broadcast networks, including CNN and BBC (Kookmin 2007).
Through the branding strategies, the Roh administration aimed to promote Korea as “creative and attractive” for tourists (Kim 2007:11)” using young, fresh and fun images to draw international tourists and financial revenue to the domestic market, and create more jobs in the tourism and other related-industries. Although the Kim administration established a nation branding base in order to combat the economic downturn caused by the financial crisis and to attract international investors, the Roh administration more actively devised policies and projects to promote the nation and facilitate economic restructuring through new industries, such as IT, tourism, and culture.


The main issue in the 2007 Presidential election was the economy. To distinguish himself from the liberal Kim and Roh, the favored candidate, Lee Myung-bak, projected himself as “the economic President,” pledging to restore the economy. His party’s slogan for the election slogan, “Lost 10 years,” referred to the economic stagnation of the preceding administrations, placing particular blame on Roh’s time in office;31 despite a series of moral issues and political scandals raised in the campaign, the strategy worked. Lee’s background as a former CEO of Hyundai Engineering and Construction and CEO-style mayor of Seoul (2002-06) gave credence to his 747 plans, calling for 7% annual growth in GDP, $40,000 USD annual income per capita, and establishing Korea as the world’s seventh largest economy (Lim 2012).

31 The Roh administration was also harshly criticized by progressives due to his neo-liberal economic policies, such as the FTA agreement with the U.S., support for Samsung, and economic polarization.
After his victory, Lee’s first foreign visit, like Roh’s, was to the United States; Lee chose New York City for his arrival, as “one can communicate with world economy” there (Kim 2008). Lee also followed Roh in organizing meetings with businesspeople in New York City to promote Korea as one of the most business friendly nations. For a keynote address, introducing himself as "a CEO of South Korea”, Lee underscored the new administration’s market friendly policies to attract investors.

“I am the first President of South Korea who is a former CEO…. South Korea is ready to be even more business friendly, if it revamps the economy.”

- President Lee in New York City, April 17, 2008

In the five years of his presidency, Lee’s economic policies centered on what was often called “Korea Inc.”: corporate-friendly economic policies, such as a high exchange rate, reductions in corporate and real estate taxes, market and financial deregulation, welfare reduction, privatization of public enterprise, and healthcare marketization—all of which greatly aided the Chaebol (Kim 2010). Although this market orientation of the state was also part of the two liberal administrations—in part to redeem the 1997 IMF bailout—the Lee administration more vigorously supported the neo-liberal economic practices; this included a reduction in social security benefits after the 2008 recession (Chang 2008; Kim 2010). Economic neo-liberalism, however, often calls for pro-business state intervention, which was ironically present in a number of Lee’s policies, particularly nation branding, green growth, and Korean food projects; the food project will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.
Presidential Council on Nation Branding.

In a speech on August 15, 2008--Independence Day--President Lee announced three new core values in Korea’s future: the development of green growth, encouragement of nation branding, and enhancement of law-abiding spirit.

“Today, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Korea, I want to put forward ‘Low Carbon, Green Growth’ as the core of the Republic’s new vision…. If we wish to be an advanced nation, we must improve our reputation in a groundbreaking manner. I will soon establish a Presidential Council on Nation Branding under the direct control of the president”

- President Lee Myeong Bak, August 15th, 2008

These three core values are related to one another; they all emphasize a new image of South Korea as a business friendly nation. The Lee's Administration kicked off a “Nation Branding” project, under the President's direct control, due to concern over South Korea's ranking as 33rd out of 50 countries in Nation Branding Index. This index, a tool developed by the custom research company Anholt-GfK to measure the image and reputation of the world’s nations, and to track their profiles as they rise and fall,\(^{32}\) has strongly influenced how Lee administration creates strategy regarding the nation’s image and reputation by transnational investment.

\(^{32}\) http://www.gfkamerica.com/practice_areas/roper_pam/nbi_index/index.en.html
As shown in Figure 15 above, several public and private actors participated in the nation branding project. The business sector, conservative media, and domestic and international academia worked together closely to achieve the promotion of positive images of the nation. The government is a main actor in this project, via the Presidential Council for Nation Branding; Euh Yoondae, a former professor and President of Korea University, nicknamed the CEO of the university for the accumulation of college development funds in his term, was appointed as chairperson. As soon as Euh was appointed in 2009, the council announced that they would make a new slogan for nation branding.
To make the branding project international in scope, a group of ‘Global Advisors’ to the South Korean President was formed of market friendly academic and public figures, including Heizo Takenaka of Keio University and Japan’s Koizumi Cabinet, Lawrence Summers of Harvard University and the Obama Administration, and Bill Gates of Microsoft. Guy Sorman, a neo-liberal French scholar, was also appointed; his presence exemplifies how the Korean government worked with international scholars to academically justify neo-liberal economic policies. Sorman had a slight expertise on Asia; he has visited Korea for meetings and talks since the 1980s, and is himself marketed as an international scholar. His positions have often been cited by the local media in purpose of upholding several neo-liberal policies such as FTA ratification.

What Forbes magazine calls the ‘Korea discount’--“the amount by which investors undervalue Korean stocks”( Salmon 2007) --was often referenced by policy makers and Chaebol leaders as the phenomenon by which Korean products are devalued because of the low national reputation. As a result, Chaebols have worked directly with the Presidential Council for Nation Branding. Samsung, Hyundai, LG, SKT, and Kolon agreed to lend middle-ranked staff members to the Council for their marketing expertise; this staff as a body was considered volunteer workers, as they are paid by the companies lending them out (Digital Times 2009). Samsung has been particularly active in the administration’s nation branding efforts. SERI (Samsung Electronics Research Institute), a private academic institute focusing on economic issues, released a series of economic reports that emphasized the importance of nation branding. SERI and the Council also consented to devise a new index--“KBI, Korea Brand Index”--to measure achievements in nation branding and systematize a management system; the funding of the
project by SERI in the name of social contribution was well publicized (Joo 2009). SERI and the Council devised the SERI-PCNB NBDO (Nation Brand Dual Octagon) and have published an annual report on nation branding between 2009 and 2012; likewise, HRI (Hyundai Research Institute) also published several reports on international competitiveness and nation branding.

More indirectly, sports have been a popular venue for business-based nation building efforts. For instance, the chairman of Hyundai led a campaign for Yeosu EXPO 2013. Similarly, the campaign for the 2018 Pyeong Chang Winter Olympics was run by the former chairman of Samsung, Lee Kun-hee, although this required a special amnesty granted by President Lee (Choe 2009). While the economic benefits of the Winter Olympics offered an excuse for the special pardon, it also clearly showed the exceptionalist attitude towards Samsung, and Chaebol in general, in the Lee administration.

Public institutes have accorded with government policies as well: the Institute for Industrial Policy Studies (IPS); Korea Development Institute (KDI) and Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) under the Office for Government Policy Coordination; Korea Culture and Tourism Institute (KCTI) under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism; and the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS) under the Ministry of Education are all engaged in nation branding project in a broader sense. Individual scholars and professors from these organizations have sometimes been appointed as civilian committee members; they also collaborated through press interviews and publications.

Other contributors are non-profit organizations and civilian groups. VANK (Voluntary Agency Network of Korea), a cyber-group with 70,000 members promoting public diplomacy, have collaborated with the National Institute of the Korean Language in “the 21st Century King.
Sejong Project,” to introduce and popularize Hangeul; this effort includes pushing private companies and foreign government agencies to correct erroneous information about the Korean language in their written materials (Hwang 2009). The group also organized the Nation Branding Up campaign, to correct malicious rumors about South Korea (Park 2008). One of the most popular TV program by MBC, Infinite Challenge, has participated in food projects by publicizing Korean food worldwide, notably including a series of episodes shot in New York City. These New York City-based efforts were joined by advertising in the New York Times for Bibimbap CF, produced by the Infinite Challenge team and Seo Kyung-duk, a professor and a PR expert in promoting Korean culture; they were also featured on a billboard in Times Square (Park 2012).

![Figure 16. Main focus on Nation Branding](image)

Internationally, the nation branding strategy aims at achieving a positive image of South Korea overseas, hailing its transition from one of the poorest nations worldwide to an economically and technically advanced nation, from a recipient to an aid country, from a country lacking an international voice to a country strengthening global communication. The G20 Seoul

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33 See more information on this project, visit their website at “http://sejong.prkorea.com/eng/main.jsp”
Summit, the fifth meeting of the G20 heads of government, should be noted as a factor in Lee administration’s nation branding efforts. Held November 11-12, 2010, in Seoul, South Korea was the first non-G8 country to host a G20 meeting; the Lee administration publicized this as a turning point for South Korea’s integration into the economically advanced nations through its important role in new global governance. Media continually aired special news programs dedicated to the meeting and its economic impact on the nation: the union at KBS (Korean Broadcasting System)\(^{34}\) released a public statement that the company devoted a total of 3,300 minutes to the meeting; even regular programs aired with banners about the G20 (KBS Union 2010); and pro-Lee journalists wrote countless articles assuring citizens that the event would boost the nation’s status in world economy. SERI published a report that South Korea would reap direct economic effects worth 102.3 billion won (87.9 million dollars), with indirect economic effects benefiting Korean companies anywhere from 21.455 trillion to 24.537 trillion won (18 billion to 20.6 billion USD) (SERI 2010); a similar report from the Institute for International Trade, projecting 31.274 trillion won (26.2 billion US dollars) in profits became a principal basis for media reports (IIT 2010), even as these forecasts were criticized as exaggerations by progressive scholars and media (Bae 2010; Lee 2010).

Domestically, nation branding enhanced the integration of a multicultural Korea and a sense of citizenship as “enhancement of law-abiding spirit” (PCNB 2010).\(^{35}\)

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\(^{34}\) Later the union argued that this was extremely biased broadcasting programing, referring as well to the unequal allotment of airtime given to each candidate in the Presidential election. (KBS Union 2012) See [http://www.kbsunion.net/968](http://www.kbsunion.net/968). Also see [http://www.kbsunion.net/220](http://www.kbsunion.net/220) for the G20.

had become an issue in the late 1990s due to an increase in foreign bridges and guest workers from southeast Asia and China; social integration of foreign-born brides and their biracial or bi-ethnic children was often emphasized by Yundae Eo at press interviewees and conferences. The council also created several projects to develop the sense that “every citizen is a single individual diplomatic to represent Korea.” To enhance citizens' manners overseas, they produced public advertisements on etiquette; in 2009, 4.22 billion won (4 billion USD) was allocated for the budget on global etiquette policies (Park 2009).

New industries were also introduced in the Lee Administration to create a new image of Korea, most notably green growth. Low-carbon green growth is defined by UNEP (United Nation Environment Programme) as industry in which natural resources are sustainable and environmental problems are minimalized (OECD 2011; World Bank 2012; Samans 2013; Green Growth Knowledge Platform 2013); this was promoted as a new growth engine under the broader nation branding project, a source of economic growth that would also create an environmentally progressive image for the nation.

The ‘Green New Deal’\(^{36}\) aimed at recovering the global economy by saving and creating jobs and lessening the income gap (UNEP 2009; Barbier 2010), achieving economic development by investing on green infrastructure (Park 2009; Lee 2009; Yoon 2009, 2011; OECD 2011; Ciocoiu 2011; Mathews 2012; Kim and Kim 2013). The Presidential Committee on

\(^{36}\) The Global Green New Deal, proposed by UNEP in 2009, was modeled on Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal polices of the 1930s. It urges G20 countries, the wealthiest and emerging economies, to spend 1% of GDP on green initiatives and prioritize energy efficiency and clean-energy investments. South Korea and China heavily invested in financial stimuli to green growth project (Barbier 2010); according to Mathews (2012), Korea’s strategy is distinguished by its focus on industry (Mathews 2012; p2).
Green Growth (PCGG), bringing together representatives from ministries, private sectors and pro-government scholars, began to promote its policies, both short- and long-term, in February 2009;\(^ {37}\) the Framework Act on Low Carbon Green Growth was enacted in 2010 (Ministry of Environment of Republic of Korea 2011; OECD 2011; Mathews 2012). Nonetheless, the Lee Administration began with an effort to stimulate the economy through a construction project: the Grand Korean Waterway, a canal that cuts across the country between Seoul and Pusan by widening, deepening and straightening the rivers, was highly controversial, and criticized not only by environmental scholars but also some economists due to economic inefficiency. In response to overwhelming public opinion against the project, Lee ended the project (SBS 06/19/2008); however, the succeeding Four Major Rivers Restoration Project (Park 2009; Lee 2009; Yoon 2009; Kim and Kim 2013) was equally controversial.\(^ {38}\)

The UNEP report “Overview of the Republic of Korea's Green Growth National Vision” (2009), finally published as “Overview of the Republic of Korea’s National Strategy for Green Growth” in 2010, portrayed such projects as good examples of the response to the Green Economy Initiative in their integration of the public and private sectors (UNEP 2009: p22-29): “Beyond its policies at the national level, the Republic of Korea is demonstrating engagement and leadership at the international level by boosting global efforts towards achieving a green economy (UNEP 2009: p 30).” The report has also been criticized as biased, as it was co-

\(^ {37}\) The National Strategy for Green Growth (2009-2050) and Five-Year Plan (2009-2013) were introduced to provide green growth policy framework. According to the OECD, the short term Five-Year Plan aims to “promote eco-friendly new growth engines, enhance peoples’ quality of life and contribute to international efforts to fight climate change” (OECD 2011: p6).

\(^ {38}\) Opponents included the Korea Federation for Environmental Movements (KFEM), the Professors’ Organization for Movement against the Grand Korean Canal (POMAC), the Korean Buddhist Jogye Order, and the Catholic Priests Association for Justice (CPAJ).
sponsored by the UNEP and the Ministry of Environment of South Korea. Nonetheless, it launched the celebration of Korea’s one-year anniversary of “Low Carbon Green Growth” (Chang 2009).

Despite its efforts to differentiate itself from liberal Kim and Roh, Lee administration followed a similar path of two former administrations. On one hand, the administration branded itself as a technically advanced nation, as highlighting a new industry, green growth, as IT and BT were in the earlier administrations. Similarly, like two administrations that devised several national projects as well as nation branding strategies for national image rebuilding to overcome financial crisis of 1997, the green growth project was promoted to strategically overcome the global financial crisis of 2008. However, collaborating with an international organization, UNEP, the project seemed to gain an international attention, despite the political scandals around the project during and after Lee’s term. On the other hand, although in fact it was the Roh administration that most nation branding policies were designed, it was Lee administration that has intensively maintained this top-down overseas cultural investment in the name of Branding Korea under the direct control of the president.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced South Korea’s new economic and cultural policies as nation branding strategies designed to overcome economic uncertainty after the 1997 financial crisis and increase Korea’s economic competitiveness amid global market changes. The South Korean government, supported by citizens, promoted soft-power and promotion of new industries and cultural content in order to build a positive national image and reputation. In order to place na-
tion branding projects in a historical context, I divided this into three stages based on political and economic structural changes and overseas cultural policies: nation building (1961-1987), transition (1987-1997) and nation branding (1997-2012). By analyzing soft power and economic policies at each stage, I investigated how global flows of economy, politics and culture, as well as people, have impacted top-down social policies, particularly cultural policies, that are designed to achieve domestic integration within the border, and later market the nation as a brand. I particularly highlighted the three Presidential administrations following the financial crisis, Kim Dae-Jung (1998-2003), Roh Moo-Hyun (2003-2008), and Lee Myung-Bak (2008-2013). Though some scholars argue that the role of nation-states is being increasingly constrained by global capital, global political institutions, and global culture (Frieden 1991; Ohmae 1995; Guehenno 1995; Gereffi 1996), I argue that these three administrations played a role of facilitators of globalization through nation branding projects.

In chapter 3, I turn my attention to New York City and Manhattan’s Koreatown as a transclave. New York City has been one of the most important global markets in South Korea’s nation branding project, particularly during the Lee administration (2008-2013), and Koreatown in Manhattan continues to be of interest to and an investment of the Korean government. I emphasize how South Korea’s nation branding project and structural changes in South Korea, as well as urban policies of New York City, have interacted with demographic changes in Manhattan’s Koreatown and the landscape of Koreatown and its role as a transclave, or a space for consumption and entertainment. I underscore how the globalization of the Korean food project, or “the First Lady project,” is practiced and embedded in Koreatown.
Chapter 3.

“Transclave”: Branding Korea, Embedded in Global City

On June 1, 2010, the New York Times ran an article by Oliver Strand, “Kyochon and Bon Chon,” introducing the continuing battle between two mega Korean-style fried chicken chains in Manhattan’s Koreatown. Although “the crisp, tawny pleasure of Korean-style fried chicken aren’t new to New York,” 2010 saw more aggressive targeting of American customers by those chains. Headquartered in South Korea, each built flagship restaurants in Manhattan’s Koreatown, within a few months of and a few blocks from each other. The New York Daily News likewise picked up on the “sizzling poultry battle,” in a December 6 article by David Yi; Clay Williams, a KFC aficionado and blogger for Midtown Lunch and UltraClan, is quoted in the article as calling the chains “a Korean chicken war.” Yet, despite the growing attention from mainstream media, “Korean food, still waiting to be discovered,” unlike other Asian foods embraced by New Yorkers (Fabricant 1999). At the same time, Koreatown was “the hidden world (Seth Kugel 2008)” and “best kept-secret”(Deborah Baldwin 2008) to non-Korean New Yorkers, mainly serving Korean nationals and Korean Americans.

Koreatown is now known as a home for a taste of Korea for both ethnic Koreans and non-Korean New Yorkers, where restaurants, bars, karaoke bars, internet cafes and all-night spas offer “Seoul-style” consumption, as Deborah Baldwin described it in a 2008 New York Times piece. This visibility comes with the growing popularity, through international social media and breakout stars like Psy, of Korean pop cultural products such as Korean drama and K-pop music. However, while Koreatown is newly visible to non-Korean New Yorkers, the Korean
Koreatown serves as an intersection site in which South Korea’s political, economic, social and cultural transnational flows meet New York City’s diverse cultural mosaic (see Figure 17). The space also offers an opportunity for the South Korean government and Korean-based corporations to expand their market in the U.S; therefore, Koreatown quickly became a hub of the Nation Branding project for the Korean government and a cultural and economic gateway for some Korean corporations prominent in the Nation Branding project.

New York City is one of the most critical overseas markets in South Korea’s Nation Branding project, and the landscape of Koreatown in Manhattan reflects this policy. This chapter investigates how the nation branding project and cultural policies in South Korea, as well as changes within New York City, have contributed to demographic changes in the space and the role of consumers in the formation of a new type of ethnic enclave in New York City: a transnational space for consumption and entertainment. I place the current Nation Branding
projects into historical context, illuminating the top-down influence of government branding policy on the formation of Koreatown as a space for consumption and entertainment, moving away from a production site. The molding of Koreatown has been ongoing since 1965; I will highlight the period from 1997 to 2014, arguing that the transformation to a space for consumers and service industry happened during this time. I will highlight four projects in New York City, funded by the South Korean government and private sector businesses in South Korea and actively supported by “transnational entrepreneurs” in Koreatown: the First Lady project, Infinite Challenge project, and New York Korea Center.

I also analyze how urban policies of New York City, particularly Midtown urban planning, has corresponded to an urban landscape change in which Manhattan’s Koreatown morphed from a dead area with welfare hotels to a busy consumption space. By emphasizing the importance of the physical space, I also argue that Koreatown is the result of a circular migration of people and cultural practices between Korean society in South Korea and American and Korean American society in the United States -- an expression of an invisible history of U.S.-Korean economic, political, and cultural relations. Archival research using secondary sources in both English and Korean is used to assess how cultural policies represented by the nation branding project and urban policies by New York City have impacted demographic and socio-spatial changes in Koreatown between 1965 and 2013.39

39 In particular, two ethnic newspapers in New York, the Korea Times (Hankook Ilbo) and New York Korea Daily (New York Joongang Daily), were analyzed for the urban history of Koreatown in Manhattan, while nationwide Korean newspapers in South Korea were analyzed for information on how the nation branding project has been embedded in Koreatown in Manhattan.
History of Koreatown

Ethnic enclaves in a global city -- such as Little India in Queens, Little Brazil on 46th Street in Manhattan, and Little Italy in Manhattan -- offer a variety of cultural experiences not only for their co-ethnic consumers but also outsider consumers, who may regard the space as an exotic cultural space (Margolis 1994; Lessinger 1995; Khandelwal 2002; Lin 2011). Koreatown resonates with unique traits to differentiate itself from other ethnic enclaves, particularly as distinct from the typical Chinatown model. First and foremost, Koreatown exists only for consumption and has not served any residential purpose for any ethnic group. While traditional enclaves include residential spaces for newer immigrants, the zoning regulations in New York City does not allow Manhattan’s Koreatown to offer residential spaces; instead, it provides additional leisure space opportunities, enabling Koreatown to be open for business at all hours. This space lies in a medium-to-high density commercial district as zoned by the New York City Department of City Planning, with very tall office buildings mirroring the nearby Empire State Building. Furthermore, investors in Koreatown tend to open restaurants and bars not only on the first floor of buildings, but also on the second, third, and fourth floors (a common practice in Seoul but not typical in New York City). For this reason, Manhattan's Koreatown has a higher concentration of retail and entertainment businesses than do other consumption spaces in New York City, which endows the space with dense shopping and entertainment opportunities.

I periodize the history of Manhattan’s Koreatown into three stages based on the economic, political and cultural changes in Korea and in New York: a traditional ethnic enclave as a space for production and wholesale businesses; transition between the late 1980s and 1997, with visits by an increasing numbers of Korean nationals, particularly students and tourists; and
finally a transnational space for leisure and entertainment after the financial crisis of 1997 in South Korea.

**Figure 18. Historical Change of Koreatown**

**Old Koreatown (Late 1960s-1987)**

The history of Koreatown dates to the late 1960s, when Korean immigrants quickly increased due to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act of 1965). Korean immigration in general is a result of a century-long relationship between the U.S. and South Korea (Koo and Yu 1981; Light and Bonacich 1991). Most Korean immigrants between 1950 and 1964 were young women who married American GIs in South Korea or were adopted after the Korean War by Americans. The 1965 Immigration Act changed the socio-demographic composition of Korean immigrants considerably. The Korean immigrants were very selective: highly educated with urban middle class backgrounds; mostly permanent immigrants; arriving

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40 According to Yoon (1996), about 30% of the Korean immigrants admitted between 1970 and 1980 were college graduates. The rate for new immigrants of all nationalities was 22% in the same period (Yoon 1991).
as nuclear families (Kim 1981; Min 1996; Yoon 1996); and with a distinct sense of national identity (Lie 2004).

Although many Korean immigrants were college-educated, they were not able to work at the level to which they were accustomed because of language barriers and racial discrimination against Asians, as well as lack of recognition of credentials. Korean immigrants were self-employed in the grocery business, dry cleaning, wholesale and retail sales of Korean-imported merchandise (Kim 2003; Lie 2004; Abelmann and Lie 2009).41 They ran small businesses either in ethnic enclaves or in lower income neighborhoods serving racial minority groups (Kim 1981; Light and Bonacich 1991; Kim 2003; Lee 2002).42

Prior to the 1990s, Koreatown in Manhattan functioned as a production space for mostly Korean wholesalers and their staff, as in a traditional ethnic enclave. The transnational character was limited to the usual model in which Korean immigrants imported goods from South Korea and sold them on the American market. In New York City, Korean immigrants opened wig and garment wholesale businesses along Broadway between 24th and 34th Streets in Manhattan (Kim 1981; Yoon 1996; Min 1996; Lin 1998). The decline of industrial sectors in New York City in 1960s and upward mobility among second and third generation Jewish and Italian wholesalers

41 According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 11.9 % of Koreans were self-employed, compared to the 6.8% national average, in 1980 (Light and Bonacich 1991).

leaving the district led to cheap rents that allowed Korean businesspeople to successfully settle in this area (Lin 2011).

The products sold by Korean businesses were mostly imported from Korea, under the military junta government policy of an exported-oriented economy and labor-intensive manufacturing industries in the 1960s and ‘70s (Koo and Yu 1981; Light and Bonacich 1991).

For instance, the Korean wig industry was directed towards the American market from its beginnings (Kim 1990; Yoon 1997). The increased demand for wigs among New Yorkers in particular as fashion items in the mid-1960s encouraged Korean immigrants to invest in wig industries through imported goods; 74 percent of Korean wigs were sold to the U.S. market (Kim 1990). Some successful immigrants in turn invested in Korea, by establishing factories and directly exporting the items from Korea. As the wig industry faded in the early 1970s, Korean businesses expanded into garment manufacturing, such as jewelry and small bag production.

In response to the increase in Korean immigration since 1965, restaurants opened to serve Korean immigrants and their children and students. *Mi Cin* at 130 West 45th Street (between Broadway and the Avenue of the Americas) was introduced by the *New York Times* on July 11, 1960, and is considered the first Korean restaurant in New York City;43 *Arirang House* on 56th Street and *Sambok* on 43rd Street followed later in the decade (Lee 2011). Due to an increasing numbers of permanent immigrants after the Immigration Act of 1965, more Korean restaurants opened as well. Although those restaurants tended to be more scattered across Midtown, between

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43 Craig Claiborne reported on *Mi Cin* in the New York Times’ article “Food News: Exotic Fare Of Koreans.” Claiborne introduced the restaurant as a place where New Yorkers could enjoy “dishes [] spiced with ginger and soy, garlic and scallions and the result is altogether excellent.”
27th Street and 56th Street, most of them were closely located to the Korean Business District between 24th Street and 34th Street and Fifth and Seventh Avenues (Lee 2011).


When I had a restaurant on 27th Street, I was not doing really well. It was really small with three tables. I had to close the restaurant on Sunday because I did not have many customers. But after Korean Air established a New York branch, 32nd Street was getting vitalized.
- An owner of A restaurant and participant at the Business Association of 32nd Street

However, even as Korean entrepreneurs slowly began to settle on 32nd Street, the space itself was not too attractive for visitors. As noted in the interview with an owner of the oldest restaurant on 32nd Street, the space was mostly for Korean immigrants. Another old-timer remembers that Midtown Manhattan was not safe to travel in. They particularly emphasized the presence of the welfare hotel at the corner of 32nd Street and Broadway.

44 New York Gomtang House, the oldest Korean restaurant in Manhattan’s Koreatown, opened on 27th Street in 1979, but moved to 32nd Street in 1982. The restaurant closed on November 1st, 2013 (NY Korea Daily November 6, 2013).
45 Hotel Stanford is owned by Joong-Gap Kwon, who also is an owner of H Mart, an Asian grocery chain, operated by the Hanahreum Group. He started a hotel business in 1986 in Manhattan’s Koreatown, and expanded his business to Panama and Chile. He also began to invest in hotel business in South Korea and opened the first hotel in Seoul in 2011. Although it does not necessarily represent Koreaness in terms of interiors, it is well-known as a Korean hotel among Korean visitors, where Korean speaking staffs work.
It was really really hard. Hundreds of black kids played just in front of my restaurants after they came back from school. Yes, the space at the corner of Broadway and 32nd Street. As they hung out, they wanted to go to bathroom, and came to my restaurant to use bathroom. Too many kids came in. So hard to manage it. They threw out ketchup to pedestrians. They did not like to walk down here. We endured and sometimes fought against them. In retrospect, I was crazy. It was really dangerous.

- An owner of K Restaurant and representative of the Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee USA

The presence of “the welfare hotel” made settlement more difficult and limited other Korean entrepreneurs to 32nd Street. As the oldest two restaurants on 32nd Street were located just across the street from the welfare hotel, these old-timers recalled that pedestrians seemed not willing to pass by 32nd Street by the late 1980s. The Radisson Martinique Hotel at Broadway and 32nd Street, previously called the Martinique, was one of the city's largest welfare hotels. Together with the Prince George Hotel at 28th Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues, it was considered the most notorious welfare hotel in the city (Kozol 1988). It served as an emergency shelter for homeless families between 1973 and 1989 (Gray 1987).46

The existence of the welfare hotels on 32nd Street reflects the role of local politics and urban planning and federal government policies on shaping and reshaping Koreatown in

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46 Appeared in the New York Times, in “Streetscape: The Hotel Martinique; Grimy Grande Dame Housing The Homeless Off Herald Sq.”, Christopher Gray introduced a history of the Martinique from being a fancy hotel surrounded by PATH, Penn Station, Macy’s and Gimbels’ flagship department store in the turn of twentieth century to a short-term shelter for homeless families in 1973. During the early twentieth century, the theaters all aggregated in Times Square, and luxurious stores left for Fifth Avenue. As of 1987, Gray wrote a piece in the New York Times on the hotel 436 of New York City’s 5,200 homeless families resided at the Martinique. The city, together with state and Federal aid, spent about $1,500 a month to keep a family of four although New York State’s housing allowance for welfare families was $270 a month (Christopher Gray September 27, 1987).
Manhattan. The welfare hotels followed a significant increase in the homeless population in New York City due to the anti-urban policies of the Nixon administration and the resulting cuts in federal assistance to cities, and the fiscal crisis of 1975 and its ensuing recession (Greenberg 2009). The situation continued to deteriorate during the Reagan Administration, when the Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) budget was profoundly retrenched. In American cities, rent had increased; families on public assistance and the working poor had to spend most of their wages on rent (Grant 1990). In New York City, a half-million legal evictions were attempted in 1983 alone (Grant 1990). In February 1987, 4,600 homeless families, with more than 10,000 children, were sheltered by New York City; 75% of the families were sheltered at the city’s welfare hotels (Grant 1990; p78).

These evictions were part of a rehabilitation plan that attempted to turn cheap housing for marginalized New Yorkers into high-end spaces (Soffer 2010). Mayor Ed Koch (1978-1989), who took office after the fiscal crisis, pursued a pro-growth regime in which New York was reshaped as a market-oriented, finance-centric city that would take a prominent role in global capital flows (Sites 1997; Weikart 2001). With the ongoing decline of manufacturing in the 1970s and development of new service industries in global cities, city governments began to devise new strategies to counteract the economic downturn, encouraging leisure, shopping, tourism and entertainment industries and developing infrastructure for these new industries

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47 According to Grant, HUD budget decreased by 79% from $14 billion in 1983 to $2.7 billion in 1987; New York City witnessed an increasing numbers of homeless families by 300% between 1982 and 1986. Their living conditions were harsh; most of children living in the shelter were under or nonimmunized and had serious health conditions, such as signs of emotional disturbance, speech delay, sleeping disturbance (Grant 1990)

The street became more accessible as Midtown became safer. 32nd Street also was influenced by this, as the Martinique was finally closed in 1989. Although the service industry was present in Koreatown on 32nd Street, targeting Korean immigrants and children of immigrants, old Koreatown itself functioned primarily as a production site, physically centered on the Korean Business District, an area from 24th Street and 34th Street between 5th Avenue and 6th Avenue, rather than on 32nd Street.

Koreatown in transition (1987-1997)

The landscape of Koreatown was changing rapidly in the late 1980s due to structural shifts reflecting South Korea’s democratization and move to heavy industry as well as New York City’s moving toward a post-industrial economy. The city was trying to entice more visitors. 32nd Street was not an exception, despite the fact that the space itself was discovered by New Yorkers and tourists; however, the space began to cater a new group of consumers in the 1990s, Korean nationals: mostly temporary residents, such as international students enrolled at college or graduate schools, language students or international tourists. In this shift, Koreatown became more of a cultural place for consumption and entertainment in line with the newly tourist-focused city economy, rather than the production-centered space it had been. This change, in which more Korean national consumers moved in and out of Koreatown, reflects structural changes both in Korea and in New York City.
By the late 1980s, the Korean economy was growing more rapidly, in part due to the 1988 Olympics in Seoul; at the same time, several pro-democracy protests in Seoul in June 1987 drew international attention to Korea in terms of human rights issues and democratization, and direct elections followed shortly thereafter (Koo 1991). Pushed by such international variables, in the late 1980s Korean society underwent a process of liberalization in terms of political and social policies. It was from this starting point that freedom of international travel was granted to Koreans in 1989 (OECD 2002). After the Foreign Travel Liberalization Act, and the gradual trend toward studying abroad as well as the economic boom, there was a rapid increase of the Korean tourist population (OECD 2002) and students eager to go to western countries, especially the United States. New York City was one of the most popular destinations for Korean tourists.

At the same time, South Korea began to move away from a production-based and export-oriented society toward a consumer society (Kang 2005; Kim 2008; Won 2008), with a wage increase for the working- and middle classes (Nam 2007). It was a time when American culture penetrated deeply into Korean daily lives. In the late 1980s, many American fast food companies opened their first outlets in Seoul: Burger King (1984), KFC (1984), Pizza Hut (1985) and Baskin-Robbins (1985), and finally McDonald’s (1988). The American influence in Korea itself was thus combined with increased exposure of Koreans to western culture through study and travel abroad. Younger generations thus began to take up such western/American characteristics as valuing individualism, anti-authoritarianism and consumption. Brand names, style, design, and leisure activities in turn became important variables to define a new generation (Kang 2005; Kim 2008; Won 2008).
In parallel, 1.5- and second-generation children of immigrants in the U.S. became visible as a new consumer group. These young Korean Americans consist of working adults or college students; they are part of the U.S. consumer generation, while actively engaging ethnic culture to develop their cultural identity (Deshpande and Stayman 1994; Xu et al. 2004) and to feel a sense of belonging and home (Ray 2004).

**Transclave: Transnational Space for Consumption and Entertainment**

Koreatown underwent a demographic change beginning in the early 2000s, intensifying around 2010, with increasing numbers of non-Korean customers due to the growing reach of Korean pop culture in the U.S. and growing food cosmopolitanism. As argued in Chapter 2, the financial crisis of 1997 was a turning point for the South Korean government’s investment in new industries, including cultural industry, to overcome economic uncertainty. When Korean pop culture – movies, music, dramas, games -- which had long been popular in Asia, finally arrived in New York City in the late 1990s, its popularity was confined to younger generations of Korean ethnics; later it spread to Asian Americans; it finally extended to non-Koreans, in a more limited fashion. Kpop became popular among Asians exposed to Korean culture before arriving in the U.S., while Asian Americans were introduced to Korean culture by their Korean friends. If the customers were not Asians themselves, they were usually accompanied by Asians, particularly Korean nationals and Korean Americans, who wanted to introduce their own food to their friends and colleagues.

Koreatown was moving toward a more commercialized space for younger generations. Many wholesalers, mostly older immigrants, sought alternative spaces due to rent increases,
while younger generations – Korean nationals, Korean Americans as well as non-Koreans, began to penetrate into Koreatown as consumers rather than producers. The Korean ethnic media in New York City began to report on the increasing number of non-Korean customers in Koreatown, particularly non-Korean Asians, and later non-Asian consumers. Asians immigrants and students exposed to Korean pop culture in their countries of origin became a big revenue source for entrepreneurs in Koreatown.

A record and video rental store on 32nd Street confirmed that about 60% of their customers are Asians, primarily Chinese (Korea Daily 2003); Hangawi, a vegetarian restaurant offering Korean temple food, and Minado, a Japanese-style seafood buffet, served mostly non-Koreans- 80% of customers are non-Koreans (Kim 2004). It was good for Korean entrepreneurs to entice Asian customers to survive the post-9/11 economic downturn, which caused a decrease in local consumption as well as in tourism. A noraebang (karaoke) owner who was interviewed on December 2008, right after the financial crisis of 2008, describes the demographic shift among her customers since the mid-2000s:

Within 2-3 years, there has been a huge increase in non-Korean customers. We target Americans and Japanese… Our old customers spread the word and we did online advertisement. Now particularly over the weekends, most of customers are non-Koreans.

- An owner of K noraebang

However, the popularity of K-pop extended to non-Asians in New York City around 2010. Youtube was particularly critical for this phenomenon; videos of the Korean wave are accompanied by sidebar recommendations, and leading to further exploration of Koreanized western pop culture. A hair salon co-owner who used to work in a high-class hair salon serving
actors in Seoul, was initially skeptical of the impact of the Korean wave. However, her
experience as part of the staff for a girl group touring America changed her opinion:

I was bit suspicious about success of Korean wave until I participated in the Wonder
Girls’ America tour a couple of years ago [in 2010]… . If they are into Kpop, they try to
understand Korean culture in general. It was very impressive.
- An owner of K hair salon on 32nd Street

Indeed, nowadays it is common to find groups of solely non-Asian customers at Korean
restaurants. This suggests that, for non-Koreans, consumption of Kpop is followed by Koreatown
consumption. Korean customers gradually became important for Koreatown businesses’ survival.

Koreatown in Manhattan is for the younger generation… Our customers in the 1990s and
the 2000s were mostly Korean international students and the second generations, but now
Koreatown cannot hold up without non-Korean customers.
-A representative of the Business Association of 32nd Street in 2012

Because of the symbolic meaning of Koreatown in Manhattan as a cultural space, it is a
very efficient gateway for the promotion of Korean pop culture in New York City. In 2007, JYP
Entertainment, one of the big three entertainment companies in South Korea and the home of
Wonder Girls, bought a building on 31st Street between Park and Lexington Avenues, just a few
blocks away from Koreatown, and established JYP USA as an outpost for the U.S. market;
Jinyoung Park, a founder of JYP Entertainment and well-known singer, even opened a Korean
restaurant, Kristalbelli, on 36th Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway in 2012. Although
their business in the U.S. market was not as successful as they expected, the presence of JYP
USA symbolized the emerging U.S. popularity of Korean pop culture. A 21-year-old non-Korean
interviewee (a Dominican) noted the many participants in a protest in front of the JYP building, against their decision to drop Jay Park from 2PM; for them, the JYP building was a place to actively engage in Korean pop culture, and led them to hang out in Koreatown afterwards. “Like, we would just go to the JYP Building and we would come back and just eat food at Woorijip in Koreatown, because it was cheap. It wasn’t expensive but it was awesome.”

In this sense, Koreatown is the only physical space for consumers in which the virtual experiences customers had through Korean drama, film and music are realized through food, shopping and entertainment. As one of my non-Korean interviewees states, “although I did not know if Ktown existed until I became interested in Korean culture, this is the only space where I actually can have Korean food and have fun as those actors and actresses do in Korean drama.”

**Construction of New Koreatown as a Transclave**

The change in Koreatown is not limited to customers. Though the growing number of non-Korean consumers in Koreatown is easily observed, it is not well-known that the increasing popularity of Korean pop culture also led to the South Korean government and Korea’s transnational corporations’ investment in Koreatown; this trend began around the mid-2000 during the Roh administration (2003-2008) and has accelerated since 2010 during the Lee administration (2008-2013). The major investment projects, led by the private sector and Korean government have made Koreatown more transnational. The government’s role in Koreatown was particularly prominent in this process not only in their own projects but also their encouragement of direct investment in Koreatown, and New York City in general, by Korean corporations.
Corporations: Koreatown as stepping stone

The interest Korean corporations based in South Korea have in expanding to and engaging with Koreatown shows that the space is not just ethnic, but transnational, replicating South Korea’s trendy culture. Large Chabols, such as Samsung, Hyundai and LG, have directly targeted American customers for many years; smaller corporations, however, have not traditionally been focused on the U.S. market, or do not present their Koreanness as part of their brand image because of negative ideas about South Korean products. Yet around 2010, several such corporations opened outlets in New York City to establish bridgeheads for market expansion; most of these outlets are located near or in Manhattan’s Koreatown.

An early adapter came in the 1990s, when Morning Glory, a Korean distributor of character-based stationary, gifts, school supplies and accessories, headquartered in Seoul, opened their first Manhattan outlet on 32nd Street. Most of the successful smaller Korea-based companies in Koreatown, however, have been restaurants and food retailers. Red Mango, a frozen yogurt store that is one of the most successful Korean franchises in the U.S., is a prominent example. Red Mango was established in South Korea in 2002 by Roni Choo, who immigrated to the U.S. at age 17 (Park 2005). A local branch, Red Mango USA, was established in 2006 by a regional partner, Daniel Kim; the first U.S. store opened in July 2007 in Los Angeles. Within two years, they opened 18 stores in the U.S.; the Koreatown location opened in 2010, while today there are more than 200 stores nationwide.

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48 They tend to engage in larger nation branding projects, as shown at chapter 2, such as sports events.
49 The Koreatown location closed in 2010.
The ‘chicken war’ between KyoChon Chicken and BonChon was likewise a step further in the international expansion of both companies. KyoChon F&B Co, headquartered in Gyunggido, has more than 1,000 branches and was the most profitable fried chicken franchise in South Korea in 2010; the first U.S. branch was established in California in 2006, and a branch in Shanghai followed in 2008. Moon-ho Kim, the director of KyoChon USA, stated in interviews with local media that “Manhattan is critical to extend our market to [the] mainstream.” (Choi 2010) and “If we succeed in Manhattan, we can do [so] eas[il]y in other markets” (Kim 2010).

Unlike KyoChon, one of the most successful fried chicken franchises in South Korea, BonChon, headquartered in Busan, the second largest city in South Korea, currently has only one store in South Korea. Although BonChon had extended its business by opening 25 outlets in 2002 in South Korea, a tight market and tough competition with larger franchises, such as KyoChon F&B Co, forced BonChon to turn attention to international markets; Jinduk Seh, a founder and CEO of BonChon, opened the first overseas outlet in Leonia, New Jersey in 2006, and soon extended his business to New York and beyond; as of May 2015, Bonchon operates 143 overseas outlets (Kim 2015).^50

The ‘chicken war’ was mirrored by a competition between the two largest Korean franchise bakeries in South Korea, Paris Baguette and Tous Les Jours, which both opened stores on 32nd Street between 2010 and 2012. Although it is not well-known to non-Korean and Korean American customers, these stores, owned by food corporations in South Korea not limited to bakeries, dominate the South Korean market. According to the Fair Trade Commission of South Korea, Paris Baguette (CPS Group) and Tous Les Jours (CJ Foodville) hold up to 69 % of the

^50 http://bonchon.com/
market share in South Korea in 2012; they are sometimes criticized as monopolistic, hurting small businesses and distorting the market (News 1 10/14/2012). *Paris Baguette* opened its first U.S. outlet in L.A.; the first East Coast store in New Jersey; and the 32nd Street location in 2010. *Tous Les Jours* established a U.S. branch in 2004; the first outlet followed in L.A. that year; their eighteenth outlet in the U.S. opened on 32nd Street, replacing the franchise *Koryodang*. The message was clear: these corporations were now aggressively targeting not only Koreans living in the U.S. but also non-Korean customers. Because of the location, the Manhattan stores were considered flagships for non-Korean customers as well as for potential franchise owners (Financial News 01/08/2013). An official from *CJ Foodville USA* said at a press interview that "we believe the business prospects are bright in New York, a city where Korean pop culture is gaining in popularity and there are plenty of health-conscious consumers" (Chosun 2012).

The two bakeries are differentiated by how they operate their outlets. Most *Paris Baguette* outlets are directly operated by *Paris Baguette USA*, whereas *Tour Les Jours* stores are largely operated by franchise owners (Lee 2013). When *Tour Les Jours* replaced *Kyorodang* on 32nd Street, they avoided opening a new space by partnering with the owner of *Kyorodang*, Choi Kyung-lim, who had been in the bakery business for ten years and held a franchise agreement for stores in New York and New Jersey; the six *Kyorodang* stores owned by Choi turned into *Tour Les Jours* with distinctive interiors (Sung 2013). This localizing strategy is similar to *Red Mango*’s hiring of local staff. *Tour Les Jours’* founder, Roni Choo, did not have much experience in business in the U.S.; he worked with a regional partner, Daniel Kim (of Red Mango) (Stewart 2008), and most of the marketing and branding strategies, such as emphasis on location and social media, were devised by the US staff (Kim 2008).
Like the Korean franchises, Korean food producers and distributors are prominent in nation branding projects. However, unlike franchises that offer a taste of Korea with standardized recipes and reconstructing Koreatown as a transclave, food producers and distributors participate in the branding project in Koreatown differently. While Korean franchises have opened outlets in Koreatown, corporations are prominent within the Koreatown business district in part through their donation of products when Korean entrepreneurs hold food related events:

Look at Sony. Japanese mega corporations have been pretty active in the promotion of Japanese culture… They [mega corporations, such as Samsung and Hyundai] do not donate for the events [organized by Korean entrepreneurs in New York]… Smaller food producers and distributors, such as Nongshim and Binggrae, do.

- An owner of K restaurant and representative of the Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee USA

For Nongshim and Binggrae,\(^{51}\) food manufacturers in South Korea, it is logical to participate in events this way for the advertising effect and to attract potential customers. Nongshim has been fairly successful in the U.S. through their instant noodles (e.g. cup noodles and Shin ramen), not only in Korean grocery stores but also Chinese and American stores and wholesalers such as COSTCO and Wal-Mart. In New York City especially, it is not difficult to find one or two kinds of Nongshim instant noodles at stores such as Key Food; many Chinese grocery stores have entire sections for Nongshim noodles. Their revenue in the U.S. market was $160 million (38% of their exports) in 2011, and their target groups have been extended to non-

\(^{51}\) Nongshim and Binggrae are processed food manufacturers in South Korea; Nongshim is the largest food manufacturer, specializing in instant noodles and snacks, while Binggrae is a daily product producer. Nongshim’s instant noodles claimed a 70% market share in Korea in 2013 (Munhwa 04/24/2003). The company began to export instant noodles to the U.S. in 1971, established a U.S. branch in 1984, and set up a factory in L.A.

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Koreans, particularly Latinos, who enjoy spicy flavors (Ahn 2012). Likewise, Binggrae also has expanded their business overseas, particularly in Russia, Asia, and Latin America, beyond the Korean ethnic market from the earlier stage (Maeil Economy 1990). Unlike mega-corporations, such as Samsung and LG, which rarely reveal that their products are “made in Korea,” these food producers and distributors stand to benefit from the popularity of ethnic products in general and Korean food and culture in particular. Particularly, food projects organized by local business people offer an opportunity to promote their products and reach new consumers.

**Government’s Narrative on Nation Branding in New York City**

Even as Korean culture gained popularity, the ethnic media pointed out that lack of promotion would hinder the consumption of Korean products, including food in Koreatown. The question of inadequate preparation for the introduction of Korean culture to the U.S. mainstream\(^{52}\) has often been brought up. In a Korea Daily article on August 12, 2005, “New York is Unprepared for Korean Wave (Ahn 2005)”, the reporter claimed that Koreatown was not ready to magnify *Hallyu*, the popularity of Korean pop culture, to American market; the absence of promotional materials, such as a guide book to Koreatown shopping or map of Koreatown -- even the lack of a clear signboard -- obstructed access to Korean culture in New York (Ahn 2005). Although there has been an effort by local business people to establish a sign or symbol for Koreatown at the corner of 32\(^{nd}\) Street and Broadway, some business persons in New York

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\(^{52}\) The term *Juryusahoi* (mainstream) frequently comes up in the ethnic media, although it is not clearly defined. Although many immigrations scholars argue that the American mainstream has changed over time (Alba and Nee ---; ), it often refers to “the white society and culture” in my interviews with Korean entrepreneurs. This is particularly true for Koreans who were born in Korea, including Korean immigrants, whether naturalized or not, and Korean nationals.
City believed that the Korean government should also take responsibility for dealing with the promotion of Koreatown.

Korean Cultural Service New York, a government institution under the control of the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea, also agreed that they also should work with other agencies to promote Korean culture in New York; at a press interview, Jinyoung Woo, a director of the Korean Cultural Service, said (Ahn 2005):

I absolutely agreed with that idea that we should provide appropriate information for those Americans who are interested in Korean culture. If we’d like to widely kindle the Hallyu fever, rather than to limit itself in just a brief introduction, thorough preliminary research, systematic data collection and collection of public opinion should be preceded and the Korean Cultural Service are preparing for them.

This interview elaborated on an on-going government project on nation branding during the Roh administration – a deep engagement in the promotion of cultural industry, Hallyu, overseas. “Han brands” or later “Han Style”, as devised by the Roh administration, classified traditional cultures into six categories; it arrived in New York City through collaboration with mega-corporations, entrepreneurs and other agencies. Hansik (Korean food), one of the six categories of Han Style project, was promoted by government agencies such as the Korean Cultural Services New York was established in 1979, in order to promote Korean culture and aesthetics in New York; it was the one of the first cultural services founded, together with Tokyo. The directors of Korean Cultural Services overseas are all government officials, appointed by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; a current director engaged in several cultural projects, such as Hallyu and cultural contents in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. They hold several cultural events such as arts performances; they also sponsor several movies festivals, such as the NYAFF, New York Film Festival, and Tribeca Film Festival in order to introduce Korean movies in New York; their library is open to anyone interested in Korean books and DVDs. For more details, see http://www.koreanculture.org

53 Korean Cultural Services New York was established in 1979, in order to promote Korean culture and aesthetics in New York; it was the one of the first cultural services founded, together with Tokyo. The directors of Korean Cultural Services overseas are all government officials, appointed by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; a current director engaged in several cultural projects, such as Hallyu and cultural contents in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. They hold several cultural events such as arts performances; they also sponsor several movies festivals, such as the NYAFF, New York Film Festival, and Tribeca Film Festival in order to introduce Korean movies in New York; their library is open to anyone interested in Korean books and DVDs. For more details, see http://www.koreanculture.org
Cultural Service, Korea Tourism Organization New York office, and Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corp. In 2005, following Korean food festivals at United Nation in 2002 and in 2003, a series of “Taste of Korea” events were designed. The first Taste of Korea event was held at Don’s Bogam, a Korean BBQ restaurant in Koreatown; journalists and critics from the New York Times, News Day, Food Network, and Wine Spectator were invited for a cooking demonstration and food tasting (Koreatimes 2005). Three other events at the end of 2005 aimed at introducing Korean food and traditional alcohol to such tastemakers as well.

Specific industries have long been chosen for development by the state in South Korea, including light manufacturing in the 60s and 70s and heavy industry in the 80s. Likewise, cuisine was considered a possible revenue source for the nation as relating it to the popularity of Korean pop culture.54

One of the main reasons for the food globalization is to internationally circulate Korean food resources and to create added values on them. … What the most important point for government projects is how to create economic values and national wealth. For that, the food should be understood as a service industry. … Culture itself does not make money. …

-An official of the KFF in Seoul,55 South Korea; author’s italics

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54 The KFF closely work with K-pop or K-drama stars by calling them public diplomats to popularize Korean food; they released a free album, called “K-Food Collaboration” directed by a popular producer, Brave Brother, sung by various K-pop stars; all songs are free to download at the KFF’s website. See http://www.hansik.org/kr/article.do?cmd=html&menu=PKR3010500&lang=kr
55 During a summer 2012 interview during my fieldwork in Seoul, I had a chance to look around their office and talk to a president of the KFF. Their office is located at “aT Center (Korea Agro-Fisheries& Food Trade Center)”, a public corporation under the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; it it obvious that they closely work with the ministry. I initially expected a medium-scale organization due to their annual budget, approved by the National Assembly. Yet their organization is small, with about ten to fifteen staff members working in Planning and Management, Business, and Promotion, and Publication.
“Culture itself does not make money”. In a post-industrial consumer society, individuals define themselves based on what they purchase (Bankston and Henry 2000); like other goods, food does not just exist for necessity but for pleasure. For nation-states, food is a good resource to add to the country’s revenue through nation branding efforts and tourism. Events for Korean nation branding and food projects were intermittently organized by several government agencies and often sponsored by corporations during the Roh administration (2003-2008). During the Lee administration (2008-2012), the President, who supported business-friendly economic policies, announced the establishment of a Presidential Council on Nation Branding under his direct control; the first lady, Yoon-Ok Kim, was deeply involved in establishing the KFF and organizing the global food project.

The KFF, under the KMFAFF, was established on March 17, 2010, replacing the Korean Food Globalization Advancement Council and Korean Food Foundation Establishment Preparation Committee. Its mission was to commercialize Korean food in key foreign countries, including the United States; the Foodservice Industry Promotion Act was enacted in March 2011, although it eventually became known, due to scandal, as “the first lady project.” The benchmarks

56 It should be noted that the global cuisine project was devised and promoted by the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, not the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is an economic department that clearly understands cuisine as an industry that would bring revenues for the country (Interview with the official at the KFF, July, 2012).

57 The Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is succeeded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in 2013 after a current president, Geun-Hye Park was inaugurated.
for the program included the Thai government’s\textsuperscript{58} Global Thai campaign, “Kitchen of the World”,\textsuperscript{59} and the Organization to Promote Japanese Restaurants Abroad (JRO- used to be Japanese Restaurants Overseas).\textsuperscript{60} The KFF aims at promoting and expanding the popularity of Korean food internationally and enhancing the image of Korea related to agriculture, forestry, marine, restaurants, travelling, and culture through creating more business opportunities in those areas.

\textbf{Figure 19. Goals of the KFF} \textsuperscript{61}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{goals_of_kff.png}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{58} The Thai government launched a global Thai food campaign in 2001 that helped send Thai chefs abroad, establish training centers around Bangkok, form food and supplier networks, and organize cooking shows and fairs (The Day March 7, 2001)

\textsuperscript{59} See their website: http://thailand.prd.go.th/ebook/kitchen/index.html

\textsuperscript{60} JRO was founded in 2007 in order to globalize sushi and wagyu (literally means Japanese cow), among other foods http://jronet.org/eng_index.html

\textsuperscript{61} This picture is captured from the KFF’s website. See http://www.hansik.org/en/article.do?cmd=html&menu=PEN1010300&lang=en
In order to develop Korean food as an industry and a “brand”, the efforts of the government should be emphasized, particularly in their advertisement of Korean cuisine in general and establishment of infrastructure, as shown in Figure 19. For the KFF, the role of the government should be limited when it comes to advertising and infrastructure so as to not distort the market.

Devising new menus is what the market does. But the infrastructure could be developed by the public sector. … We do PR and infrastructure establishment. … Image making process through several attributes that Korean food has [is a critical work].

-An official of the KFF in Seoul, South Korea

As the official at the KFF states, the KFF officially insists on limiting the role of the government to advertisement and infrastructure development. The government helps facilitate cultural globalization in two directions: from a semi-periphery nation to periphery nation (from South Korea to Asian countries) and from a semi-periphery nation to a core nation (from South Korea to the U.S. and Western Europe).

The KFF aims to position Korean food in the top five most popular (ethnic) cuisines worldwide by 2017. The KFF developed and completed several large projects, including Korean Food Storytelling (books on the history of Korean food); Korean Food Exhibition; Guidance on Restaurant Business; and Developing and Publicizing Standardized Recipes. The results of these projects were published online and shared for free. They even published several reports to guide small business people to successfully establish their business in a new land; these guides can be

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62 The KFF defines Korean Food Brand as “a balanced brand that respects both the environment and people” --balancing between human and nature”. See their website: http://www.hansik.org/en/article.do?cmd=html&menu=PEN1010200&lang=en
downloaded on their website. Over two years, $23.6 million was spent through the KFF (Hankyeore, February 6th, 2012).

An interesting emphasis at the beginning of the project was to standardize Korean food. Offering banquets with Korean food based on standardized meal composition and menus during the G20 Seoul Summit, held between November 11-12 in 2010, the importance of standardization was underscored by government officials, including staff of the KFF and the media. Although it was intensively advertised by the government agencies during the Summit, it was Roh Administration (2003-2008) that firstly kicked off Han Style project. Korean food was also notified as one of six categories to be commercialized and globalized. In order to globalize and commercialize Korean food, they recognized the standardization of Korean food recipes as a critical factor. Korean cooking method is based on the memory and family recipes verbally passed down rather than measured and quantified method; even it was recognized as one of national tasks for scientific approach to traditional cuisines for industrialization; the initiative was taken by the MCST and MFAFF; and both parties agreed on MOU in 2006. Through this project, Korean food was expected to be localized for local taste in a global context and successfully commercialized (Han Style 2007).

The globalization of Korean food particularly during Lee Administration (2008-2013) was highlighted by the first lady, Yoonok Kim, who was deeply involved in the Korean Food

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63 Han Style was devised to brand traditional Korean culture by selecting six sub-categories during Roh Administration: Hangeul(language), Hansik(food), Hanbok(traditional clothing), Hanji(traditional papers), Hanok (traditional houses), and Hanguk-eumak (traditional music), that represent and symbolize traditional Korean culture. The project aims at commercializing, industrializing and globalizing those cultures and boosting nation’s image. For more information, visit their website at http://www.han-style.com

64 For more detail, visit their website at http://www.han-style.com:8001/english/
Globalization Advancement Council as an honorary president. Called a Korean food missionary and food diplomat by the conservative media, she even published a book, “Kim Yoonok’s Korean Food Stories”, with photos of herself cooking Korean food; about $100,000 was budgeted to publish the book, which was distributed at the Summit. She was on TV news such as CNN and TV shows in order to advertise Korean food. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and Korea Tourism Organization (MCSTK) organized C20 (Culture 20), linked to the G20 Seoul September 8-10, inviting filmmakers, entertainers, chefs, architects and designers who represent G20 nations for an opportunity to experience Korean culture. The first lady invited participants such as Guy Sorman, a French economist; Vittorio Missoni, an Italian fashion designer and CEO of Missoni; and Gemil Ipekci, a Turkish designer; in their meeting on Korean culture, particularly food, she called for increased attention by such tastemakers to Korean food (Ahn 2010).

The government also selected target markets and organized committees at the city level for large investments; particularly global cities were attractive the KFF for the investment; New York City, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Tokyo, Osaka, Yanbian, Shanghai, Hongkong, London, Paris, Sydney, and Auckland. As selected based on global city index by Forbes or/and by the Foreign Policy (Interview with the official, 2012 June)65, these cities became the main camps for other parts of each country. New York City, considered as one of the trendiest global cities by the KFF, is the main market in North America (MFAFF 2011). As noted in the interview with an official at the KFF,

65 At the time of the interview, he was not sure if it was Forbes or the Foreign Policy.
The city [New York City] plays a role as an antenna [for bigger market]. The market is there; Koreatown is already there, there are many Korean restaurants already. There is no way for us to ignore New York because we cannot follow the trend if we do. … If you think of power of opinion leaders, you could understand it. … It you make it there, you are gonna make it anywhere.

-An official at the KFF in Seoul, July 2012

The KFF considers New York City the North American hub for the Korean food project. New York City is the most racially and ethnically diverse city in the nation; it is identified with multiculturalism, a history of immigration, and the size of the foreign-born population, as well as business opportunities. Although Los Angeles has the largest Korean population in the U.S, New York City is the cultural trend setter and a hub of world economy and media, especially in the context of multiculturalism. While recognizing New York City as a [marketing] outpost for the food globalization project, the MFAFF also announced that they would provide various hands-on experience events and media promotion and carry out annual surveys in order to reflect its public opinions to cultural policies overseas (MFAFF 2011).

This is consistently underscored by National Assembly members at the annual inspection of the Ministry of Foreign Affair’s Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York, since the government’s active investment on nation branding in 2002.  

66 67 It was highlighted

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66 Having experienced the financial crisis, the nation’s credit rating was given close attention by government officials, politicians, corporations, scholars and journalists, particularly by corporations such as Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch IBCA, headquartered in New York City. The National Assembly is not an exception; they often emphasize that a positive relationship with financial opinionmakers will positively influence foreign investment (see 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 stenographic records for further information).

67 In order to analyze how the government officials at Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York and foreign affair section members of National Assembly treat New York City as a hub of finance and culture, I closely studied the National Assembly stenographic records between 2002 and 2012. Those records are available at National Assembly’s Knowledge
further after Ban Ki-moon was elected Secretary-General of the United Nation in 2007; as Bong-

joo Moon, a Consul General of Korean Consulate General in New York stated at the annual
inspection in 2006, invoking the lyrics of John Kander and Fred Ebb’s ode to the city, “New

York, New York”, “If we can make it in New York, we'll make it anywhere!” The food project in
particular was promoted as a way to do so.

Public-private partnership

Although the KFF heavily is dependent on the government budget, they also actively
work with the private sector, as do most Korean food projects under the slogan, “Discover
Korea’s Delicious Secret”.  

Figure 20. A Slogan of Korean Food Promotion Overseas


68 In order to target Asian countries, the KFF collaborated with a boy group, “Super Junior” that
showed enormous success in Asian market; however, this strategies was not highlighted in New
York project, due to the popularity of Kpop at lesser degree.

69 This logo is captured from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs’ press release
=0&dlbt=
For public actors, government agencies, the KFF, the MFAFF and KAFTTC included, were active to devise several projects, particularly targeting New Yorkers.

Figure 21. Actors of Public-Private Partnership in New York City

This is not limited to Chaebols or smaller corporations in South Korea; for instance, South Korea’s the most popular TV show, Infinite Challenge, devised a food project in New York City. Transnational entrepreneurs—either immigrants or transnational corporations—and children of immigrants in receiving societies are also critical actors in the project, specifically as practiced in in New York City. In this process, “the local” and “the below” are emphasized in the process of transnational cultural activities (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Schiller, Basch and Blanc

70 Chaebols have actively participated in several nation branding projects, particularly sports-related; they invested in professional, amateur, and national sports teams to achieve the best outcome at international competitions, such as the Olympics. Some Chaebol CEOs are presidents of amateur sports leagues.
1995; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Portes 1996; Levitt 2001; Vertovec 2004); those transnational actors often move back and forth between two nations, whether physically or symbolically (Portes 1996; Levitt 2001)

**Infinite Challenge food project**

*Infinite Challenge*, broadcast by MBC (Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation), is one of the most popular TV shows in South Korea. In 2009, the *Infinite Challenge* team announced that they planned a series of episodes on Korean food called *Sikgaek* (Gourmet). The first two episodes focused solely on Korean food in Korea; participants spent sixty days learning to cook from chefs in Korea. They then visited New York City for about a week, interviewing non-Koreans (New Yorkers) and asking if they knew Korean food, had ever tried it before, and so on. The final event was a competition, in which New Yorkers were invited to one of the most popular Korean restaurants among non-Koreans, Bann on 50th Street.

Infinite Challenge, together with Seo Kyung-duk, a professor and a PR expert in Korean culture promotion, later initiated two more projects aimed at publicizing Korean food worldwide. A full-page advertisement featuring a picture of *Bibimbap*, a bowl of mixed rice with vegetables and meat, appeared in the December 22, 2009, New York Times. Reading “How about *Bibimbap* for lunch today?”, the ad included the phone numbers of 17 Korean restaurants in Manhattan, seven of which were in Koreatown; it also clearly stated that Koreatown on 32nd Street is where to indulge in Korean cuisine (Kim 2009). Kim Tae-ho, a main producer of the program, said at the press interview, “We could learn that Korean food is not really popular among non-Koreans by producing the project, *Sikgaek*: globalization of Korean food. So we thought it would be a
more efficient strategy to entice customers highlighting a particular item, such as *Bibimbap* or *Kimchi*, rather than to just publicize Korean food in general.” (Today Korea 2009/12/22).

A series of further *Bibimbap* advertisements appeared in New York City. A *Bibimbap* CF was displayed on the billboard in New York’s Times Square in November 2010; it began with seven Korean men rhythmically cutting colorful vegetables on cutting boards in a manner reminiscent of *Nanta*, a non-verbal comedy show based on the sound and rhythms of *Samulnori* (Korean drumming), but the instruments were knives, cutting boards, and water containers. This positioned *Bibimbap* as the taste of harmony, where meat, vegetables and rice come together. In 2011, the CF was aired on seven cable channels, including CNN, ESPN, and the Food Network, for a month (Jung 2011). The edited version of the *Bibimbap* CF aired again in Times Square December 2012-January 2013. Another full-page *Bibimbap* advertisement appeared in the January 13, 2013 New York Times, featuring one of the most popular *Hallyu* actresses outside Korea, Young-ae Lee by courtesy of *Infinite Challenge*. Some restaurant owners in New York put this image in their own restaurants courtesy of Infinite Challenge.

The food project by *Infinite Challenge* was independent; however, it fit in with the larger official nation branding efforts. Two chefs in the episodes on Korean food in New York were recommended by KAFFTTC, a public enterprise under the MFAFF; they in fact consulted with the government agency from the beginning of the project. Although the first advertisement was self-funded, the second project was largely sponsored by KFF and the MFAFF. The end of the CF shows the logo of the KFF, “Taste of Korea”. The MFAFF spent about $200,000 for CF airing at cable channels; the ministry announced that the CF aired in Times Squares to attract American customers (Jung 2011). The CF, a copyright free content, soon spread out to other countries and
was posted on Youtube by netizens; Arirang TV, an international English-language network, operated by the Korea International Broadcasting Foundation, aired the CF 40 times a week in 188 countries in 2010 (Moon 2010). In 2013, the project continued as a form of the world Bibimbap PR project, and the CF aired in Asian and European countries.

**Government Direct Collaboration with Korean Entrepreneurs**

In addition to targeting New York City in general, the KFF has also attempted to exert direct influence on the businesses of Koreatown. Many entrepreneurs in Koreatown have been involved in the KFF’s project launching a “globalization of Korean food.”

Although the government budget for the globalization of Korean food is secured, it is important to establish a bottom up project in New York City [by local business people] and to propose some ideas gathered by the locals to the central government [Korean government]. In this sense, Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York will mediate between two parties.


The KFF has closely worked with entrepreneurs and agencies on the East Coast as well as on the West Coast.\(^71\) The Eastern United States Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee (EUSKCGC)\(^72\) was launched on January 29, 2010; some of Korean restaurant owners of the Koreatowns in Manhattan, Flushing and New Jersey participated in the Committee; as of January

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\(^{71}\) Later entrepreneurs on the South East, covering Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Tennessee, organized the South East Coast committee on globalization of Korea food, on April 11th of 2012.

\(^{72}\) Their website is linked at the KFF, [http://newyork.hansik.org/us/index.do](http://newyork.hansik.org/us/index.do)
2014, 15 restaurants are registered.73 The speech made by Mr. Joo, Consul General of Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York, clearly states that this project involves both the public and private sectors: participants include the President, the first lady, the KFF, Korean Tourism Organization (KTO), the MFAFF, Consulate General of the Republic of Korea (CGROK) in New York, and local businesspeople in New York’s two Koreatowns.74 These projects by the KFF in New York City, were actively collaborated with Korea Agro-Fisheries Trade Corporation also under the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries that has an office in Great Neck, Long Island.

Several restaurant owners participated in this project, attending meetings in the hope of benefiting from the popularity among customers of Korean food in New York; those restaurants that participate in the project put the KFF’s logo, Taste of Korea, in front of their restaurants, although the meaning of the logo is not clearly delivered yet to the consumers.

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73 The website listed 15 different restaurants that participate in the committee as of 2014 January; five were located in Manhattan. However, the number was slightly different from the numbers that I heard from a representative at the interview in 2012. In addition to the later date, I assume that the difference is due to the website counting the number of restaurants, while the representative used the number of owners; some participants have multiple stores not only in Manhattan but also Queens and New Jersey.

74 The second Koreatown in New York was established in Flushing, Queens in the 1980s. Flushing’s Koreatown is different from Manhattan’s Koreatown in many ways: it is a traditional ethnic enclave, a mixture of residential and commercial spaces; it is more family-oriented since it offers residential areas; it connects to extended Koreatown area in Queens and Long Island such as Bayside, Little Neck, and Whitestone.
However, not all restaurant owners are active in this project. They involve in this committee at different degrees. According to the representative of the EUSKCGC, only 12 entrepreneurs from NY-NJ area Koreatowns actively participate in the project.

Some people just put their names on it, while some are pretty active. There are 12 people who pay membership fee and suggest their own opinions. These members have rights for voting.

- A representative of the EUSKCGC and owner of K restaurant
In this way, these entrepreneurs, who often travel between two nations, play a role as mediators connecting the top-down policies of the government with the bottom-up participants – Korean nationals, Korean Americans and non-Koreans. Although limited numbers of entrepreneurs participate in the committee, these members are proactive in building up Koreatown as a bridge for the success of the Korean cultural policies to mainstream America; establishing cooperation between the public and the private sector in this way enriches both parties (Linder 1999). 75

The EUSKCGC, together with the KFF, devised and executed several projects in New York City. New York City’s “Discover Korea's Delicious Secret” campaign was originally devised by the KFF to promote Korean food overseas in China, the U.S. and Europe; it is a product of the KFF and the MFAFF, sponsored by the KRA(Korean Restaurant Association). As a part of the New York City campaign, a mobile kitchen offered complimentary Korean fare in 18 public spaces in Manhattan, including Bryant Park, Union Square, Koreatown and Columbus Circle, from April 18 to May 20, 2011 (Choi 2011). Nine Korean restaurants, including Danji, Gemgangsan and Don’s Bogam, participated in this project as rotating each day; by actively using social network, they announced the locations via Facebook and twitters. Likewise, on August 16 in the same year, the committee organized the 2nd Annual Korea Day at Naumburg Bandshell in Central Park, aimed at promoting diverse aspects of Korean culture.

75 Despite the small numbers of entrepreneurs actively participating in the committee, it should be noted that there are many entrepreneurs who have multiple stores not only at Manhattan’s Koreatown but also Flushing or/and New Jersey.
As seen in the Figure 23, the most outstanding component was the food; supported by the KFF and MFAFF, the CGRKNY and KCS in New York, and sponsored by Korean food
companies such as Bingree and Nongshim, the Committee organized a Korean Food Exhibition that offered samples of Bulgogi & Ssam (soy sauce marinade beef and fresh vegetables), Japchae (stir fried sweet potato noodles with vegetables), Bibimbap (rice with vegetables and beef), Jeon (Korean pancake), and Kimchi, among others, prepared by local restaurants. They also showed Dduk-mea chi-gi (the process of making dduk, Korean rice cake), and the making of Kimchi and Giant Bibimbap (Park 2011). The president of the KFF, Il-sun Yang, flew to New York to participate in this event; she clearly announced the importance of New York in series of food projects; “the Korean Food Foundation aims at beginning to boom the popularity of Korean food in New York and spread out to other countries” (MFAFF 2011)

Three major projects, one centering on food and the others on Koreatown itself, show the intensive government involvement in Koreatown in New York City. In 2011 the KFF even launched the “New York Flagship Korean Restaurant” in Manhattan\(^76\); it was intended that the KFF would invest $5 million for the initial costs of establishing a flagship restaurant, approved by National Assembly despite the strong objection by opposite parties and the public, and recruit private companies to invest $10 million for management and maintenance. New York was the first city targeted in the overall project; they planned to expand their project to other cities following success in New York. Yet this project finally failed to recruit a single investor.

**Making Landscape of Koreatown**

Because altering the physical landscape of Koreatown was thus already a possibility, other related issues caught some National Assembly members’ attention. At the section on

\(^76\) For further discussion on “New York Flagship Korean Restaurant,” see Chapter 4.
Diplomacy, Trade and Unification in North America during the Inspection of the Administration by the National Assembly in 2009, Parliamentarian Sun-Young Park, speaking of Korean restaurants, noted:

The interiors look bit outdated. It could be little inappropriate to say, but it should be improved for more Koreanish and sophisticated…. Food does not only represent quantity but quality nowadays; further, people eat the image of the food. For example, Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York could subsidize expenditure on bathroom improvement. I think it could happen if Consulate General closely work with Korea - Foundation and Overseas Korean Foundation (Meeting stenography 2009: p27)

The following year, on October 14, 2010, in Seoul, a Consul General of the Republic of Korea in New York, Young-Mok Kim, urged the Assembly’s attention toward signboards in Manhattan’s Koreatown. As he said at the Inspection of the Administration by the National Assembly in 2010, “We have discussed for a long time. However, due to the budget issues, we make a slow process [on signboard improvement in Koreatown]. I’d like to call for the attention from Korea.” Hyo-Jae Kim, an elected Parliamentarian from the ruling Saenuri Party, also agreed that Koreatown should improve its physical appearance to give a better impression about Korea.

Particularly, signboards in Koreatown resembles those [the oversized and obtrusive] signboards in Korea destroying landscape. … It does not match with the images of New York either. …. It feels so chaotic. It probably will leave a [bad] impression about Korea like that. ….. The signboard should be more modern and standardized. … This is a great space for showcasing Korea, but these [the oversized and obtrusive] signboards leave much to be desired. But isn’t it their own work? (Meeting stenography 2010: p11)
However, unlike Young-Mok Kim, who asked for financial support, Hyo-Jae Kim insisted that Korean entrepreneurs should take financial responsibility and improve the landscape of Koreatown to make it more modern and clean, showcasing a similar modern and clean contemporary Korea. However, although the government would not take a financial responsibility, the nation would still benefit from the improvement. Despite disagreement on finances, a Consul General of the Republic of Korea in New York, Young-Mok Kim, agreed that the government should closely work with Korean entrepreneurs in order to reconstruct the landscape of Koreatown in order to attract non-Koreans and promote the nation. He said:

I absolutely agree with you and the issue has been taken care of. … We plan to persuade the business people to replace their signboards to standardized ones, which are designed in Korea but localized in New York context.

Young-Mok Kim and Hyo-jae Kim ultimately agreed to practice and implement government policies in overseas Koreatowns, even though the Korean government does not have political ability to do so. In fact, the Signboard Improvement Project clearly shows the government’s claiming of Koreatown as “imagined property” crossing the borders. The project kicked off in 2003 in Seoul as a part of the urban design projects “Jongro Upgrade” and Chunggyechun Signboard Improvement”, to address concerns that signboards on buildings were illegal; densely crowded and disorganized; and violate the public right to walk (Song and Kim 2007). The mayor of Seoul, Myung-bak Lee, who later became a president in 2008, put a great emphasis on urban renewal in central Seoul; his successor, Sehoon Oh (2006-2011), underscored the project as part
of the ‘Design Seoul Initiative’. The idea of exporting the project to the U.S. was simple: implement urban policies successfully in Seoul, then send them to Manhattan’s Koreatown. For the Korean government, despite the absence of legal rights in Koreatown, Koreatown is not only a platform to promote the nation through public and private partnership, but also an imagined property that the government can symbolically claim outside its territory.

Likewise, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in South Korea has also earmarked $63 million for the construction of a new building on 32nd Street between Park Avenue and Madison Avenue in Manhattan. Having bought a development parcel at 122 East 32nd in 2009 for $16 million (Slatin 2012), this is intended to be the new location for the “New York Korea Center,” encompassing what is currently the New York Cultural Service (located on Park Avenue between 57th and 58th Streets, and under the direct control of Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York) and including a theater, exhibition rooms, a library and Korean language classrooms, to offer a cultural space for Koreans and New Yorkers (MCST 2012). This location, moving from the concentration of consulates in the East 60s to Manhattan’s Koreatown, highlights the importance the South Korean government places on cultural branding.

However, as of November 2015, the project has not yet been completed. The MCST has failed five times to select the contractor due to the low construction costs appropriated in 2012. In May, 2015, the KCC announced that the MCST finally increased costs to 39.2 billion won (about $33 million) and will resume the project; however, Korean construction companies in

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77 Several plans on urban design were devised and new buildings were constructed during his two terms; the Design Seoul Headquarters was launched in April 2007; in July, the Seoul Metropolitan Government established the ‘Advertisement Upgrade Plan’, stressing the role of the public sector in removing public banners. 25 local governments of Seoul participated in this project, which spread to other cities and towns (UNPAN)
New York criticize that the government plan has excluded Korean construction companies due to the strict qualification that limits the application to companies that have completed construction costing 30 billion won (about $26 million) or more in the past ten years and requested to alleviate its qualification (Cho 2015).

Despite such controversy since 2012, the government’s Branding Korea project is capitalizing on the established presence of Koreatown; as Koreatown is being re-invented and re-constructed as a cultural space in an “Transclave” in a global city, where contemporary consumer culture is presented and practiced by various producers and consumers as well as the government of a sending society.

Conclusion

This chapter investigated how South Korea’s nation branding and soft-power policies; the transnational flows of people, capital and culture; and the urban landscape of New York City have contributed to the formation of a new type of ethnic enclave: what I call the “transclave.” It is a space where Korean consumer culture is marketed to mainstream America, beginning with flows of temporary transnational migrants from Korea and Korean Americans and extending to other non-Koreans. This chapter particularly looks into how the Nation Branding project and cultural policies in South Korea are embedded in the global city and mingled with the receiving society in the “transclave.” This is done by periodizing the history of Koreatown into three stages based on structural changes both in South Korea and in New York City: a transnational ethnic enclave after the 1965 U.S. immigration reform; transition after democratization in 1987 until 1997 financial crisis in South Korea; and a “transclave” since the crisis of 1997.
South Korea’s “globalization of Korean food” project was particularly emphasized in order to analyze how businesspeople in the private sector, including both immigrants and Korea-based franchises, and organizations dealing with Korean economic issues, play a role as mediators of the top-town influence by the South Korean government, supported by Korea-based transnational corporations, and bottom-up participants, like ordinary consumers. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews with those producers, as well as journal articles, academic reports by South Korean government and private institutes, and stenography of the annual inspection of the Ministry of Foreign Affair’s Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York by National Assembly members, I show that South Korea and transnational corporations have been actively invested in the “transclave” in order to utilize it for market expansion through branding and embedding the cultural meaning of the nation-state. In this sense, the nation-state is as a *facilitator* of the new global order, actively utilizing the meaning of nation and nationalism in a new economic order.

In the following Chapter 4, I will focus on narratives of entrepreneurs in and around Koreatown, whether old timers or newcomers, as mediators of top-down policies from South Korean government and bottom-up participants by various consumers. If Chapter 3 highlighted stories of Korean government on a series of globalization of Korean food projects and reconstruction of a “transclave”, the following chapter focus on how these entrepreneurs, what I call “transnational entrepreneurs” react to the government policies and reinvent the space. I will particularly typolize various transnational entrepreneurs into four categories and show how each group contribute to re-invention of Koreatown as a “transclave.”
Chapter 4  

Reinventing Koreatown:  

Typology of Transnational Entrepreneurs  

“I am very proud that Korean food is now booming in New York City, a heart of world culture.”  
- First Lady Yoon-ok Kim, at Danji in Manhattan, September 21, 2011  

When Yoon-ok Kim, the First Lady of South Korea, visited New York City, she had busy schedule, making visits to three Korean restaurants in midtown Manhattan during the President’s official visit for the UN General Assembly in 2011. She began her restaurant tour with breakfast at the Michelin one star restaurant Danji in Hell’s Kitchen on September 21st; there, she praised the efforts of the Eastern United States Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee, Korean and non-Korean chefs, food truck entrepreneurs, and Korean food bloggers for the promotion of Korean food in New York City, and emphasized the importance of networks among New York Korean restaurants in the promotion of Hallyu. Later that day, she visited Chef Angelo Sosa’s Social Eatz, then attended the EUSKCGC’s board meeting at Don’s Bogam on 32nd Street. She talked with about 10 board members, mostly Koreatown businesspeople; the entrepreneurs emphasized the role of the South Korean government’s on-going efforts in attracting more customers to Korean food (Park 2011). The First Lady’s visit to these restaurants suggests how important Korean food overseas is to the country’s global branding efforts -- and how deeply the Korean government, even at the highest level, is involved in promoting Korean food as a brand.  

78 Chef Angelo Sosa gained intense attention from the Korean media as he developed his fusion of Korean and American food, the Bibimbap burger. However, the major investor of Social Eatz is a Korean American entrepreneur, Bobby Kwak.
The *transclave* of Koreatown is formed by the interaction between government agencies in Korea and ground efforts by transnational entrepreneurs in midtown Manhattan to bring Korean food and other products to a transnational market of consumers. In this chapter, I bring attention to individual local businesspeople in Koreatown and Korean franchises that have expanded their businesses into the U.S. market, particularly around 2010; while there are many terms for businesspeople outside their home country, operating within a transnational world, such as ‘transnational capitalist class’, ‘transnational entrepreneurs’, or ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’, I prefer the term ‘*transnational entrepreneurs*’. I highlight the role of these *transnational entrepreneurs*, whether old timers or newcomers, individual entrepreneurs or franchises, as *mediators* that connect top-down government policies and bottom-up participation by various customer groups. I also underscore the role of South Korean franchises that have aggressively entered the U.S. market in the post-financial crisis era; their outlets on 32nd Street are a key part of the process of making Koreatown more transnational. The role of transnational entrepreneurs who have Korea-related businesses outside of Koreatown, and staff who work at Korea-related organizations, are also analyzed, as ‘cultural transmitters’.

This chapter includes 17 interviews with Korean entrepreneurs and managers in Koreatown and officials working in Korea-related organizations; in this section, these are analyzed in order to show how top-down policies overseas are practiced transnationally and embedded in New York City.79 Twelve interviewees own service businesses or are store

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79 Interviews were conducted in New York City, with one exception—an interview with an official of the Korean Food Foundation conducted in their Seoul office in Summer 2012. Four of the subjects were interviewed during preliminary fieldwork between April 2008 and December 2009, while the rest were conducted during intensive fieldwork between April 2012 and December 2012. Fifteen interviews were conducted in Korean, while one interview with a non-
managers; seven of these are old timers who immigrated in the 1970s and ‘80s. Six of the restaurant owners have multiple stores on 32\textsuperscript{nd} Street or other Koreatowns in New York- New Jersey area; one owner, whose former manager was interviewed, has stores in both New York and L.A. Two interviewees had participated in the Globalization of Korean Food project at the time of the interview. These mediators of nation branding projects, e.g. transnational entrepreneurs and transnational cultural transmitters, have accelerated the flows of Korean food and help embedded and territorialized it within a \textit{transclave} in New York City.

\textbf{Cultural Transmitters in a Transclave}

\textbf{Transnational Entrepreneurs}

A new circuit of production and consumption in the global market, not limited to the boundaries of the nation state, has engaged scholars of globalization and immigration in terms of flows of capital, people and culture. Due to the mobility of capital, the global circuit of accumulation, global fragmentation, transnational organizations and transnational corporations that move in and out by crossing borders, and the movement of people between two nations or more, some scholars point out that the emergence of the new economic system appeared with or enhanced the advent of new global or transnational classes, called the “Transnational Capitalist Class” (Robinson and Harris 2000; Sklair 2001).\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{80} Korean official who worked for the Korea Society, a Korea-related organization in New York City, was done in English. Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. A new economic transformation, what Sklair calls “transnationalization of capital”, offers the material basis for TCC and claims its ownership and/or control of the capital; this intensive degree of transnationality among the TCC differentiates them from local capitalists (Robinson and Harris 2000: p--; Sklair 2001). Sklair organizes TCC into four subcategories: the corporate fraction (TNC executives and their local affiliates); the state fraction (globalizing bureaucrats...
Although past scholarship on immigrant entrepreneurship focused heavily on the role of entrepreneurs in a receiving societies (e.g. “Immigrant Entrepreneurs” by Light and Bonacich (1988) and “Ethnic Entrepreneurs” by Waldinger et al (1990)), current immigration scholars have started a debate on immigrant entrepreneurship and developed terms reflecting the new economic system; this has highlighted the role of self-employed immigrants (Zhou 2004). The concepts of “transnational entrepreneurs” (see Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt (1999); Portes (2000); Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo (2002); Levitt and Jaworsky (2007); Chen and Tan (2009); and Light (2010)) and “enclave entrepreneurs” (Zhou) are part of these ongoing scholarly efforts.

‘Transnational entrepreneurs’ refers to self-employed immigrants who maintain a transnational tie to another country, typically their home country (Portes, Guarnizo and Haller 2002; p287); while enclave entrepreneurs, according to Zhou, limit their business opportunities within the co-ethnic social structures and location (Zhou 2004; p1042). Enclave entrepreneurs should be distinguished from ethnic entrepreneurs, because the latter also includes those who cater to those outside the ethnic community (e.g. middleman minority). Yet nowadays there is an increasing

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81 Waldinger and Aldrich underscore opportunity structure and group characteristics as factors in developing ethnic entrepreneurship among certain immigrant groups. The shift from an industrial to a post-industrial economy means that immigrants face a different market condition from that of earlier immigrants (Alba and Nee 2004). Although immigrants always overrepresented as self-employed (e.g. among Jews, Italians, Greeks and Chinese), this structural change has further expedited the tendency (Waldinger and Aldrich 1990; Aldrich and Waldinger 1990).

82 Earlier, Portes also developed enclave labor market, based on dual labor market theory. He pointed out two characteristics of immigrant enclaves: high portion of immigrant-own business hiring co-ethnic members and spatial clustering (Portes 1981; Light et al. 1994).

83 For more research on middleman minority, see Bonacich’s classic work, "A theory of middleman minorities" (1973), and P.G. Min’s Caught in the middle: Korean merchants in America’s multiethnic cities (1996).
desire for ethnic products by non-co-ethnic groups, particularly as the transnational capital, labor, and consumer market from the sending society become visible in a receiving society’s enclave economy (Zhou 2004).

In this sense, in the process of reverse transnationalism from a sending society to a receiving society, the role of transnational entrepreneur is particularly prominent in a *transclave*. South Korea’s nation branding plans show the importance of local investment in making government plans work; this is particularly true in the process of the globalization of Korean food projects in New York. Some entrepreneurs, mostly older and traditional, work directly with the Korean government; more importantly, however, many indirectly participate in the nation branding project by maximizing their profits through an emphasis on the popularity of the culture of their country of origin, and by amplifying the collective urban identity of Koreatown as a hub of Koreanness in Manhattan. This is particularly true for the generation of newer and younger entrepreneurs that seek to differentiate themselves from traditional immigrant entrepreneurship. Transnational entrepreneurs also mediate between top-down government policies and bottom-up participation by various consumer groups through their transnational business strategies, from engaging in nation branding projects delivered by South Korean government agencies to transnationally marketing ethnic culture.

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Typology of Transnational Entrepreneurs

Based on my in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs and managers; participant observation -- which involved teaching Korean weekly at a non-profit organization (2012-2013) and working 20 hours a week between August and December 2012 at a language school in Koreatown; and secondary sources such as ethnic news articles and government reports, I have categorized the transnational entrepreneurs in Koreatown as Ethnic (traditional entrepreneurs), New, Franchise, or Creative. The factors for these categorizations are geographical location (Koreatown or non-Koreatown); ownership (individual or Korean franchise); generation or cohort (old-timers or new-comers); mobility between the U.S. and Korea (high or low); and involvement in nation branding projects (direct or indirect), particularly Korean food projects (See Table 3 below). Ethnic entrepreneurs have relatively small businesses and later adopt transnational trends; new entrepreneurs, either Korean Americans or Korean emigrants, began their businesses post-1997, spiking around 2010; franchise entrepreneurs have bought Korean and Korean franchises with direct investment; and creative entrepreneurs have high-end businesses outside Koreatown and seek to differentiate themselves from Koreatown entrepreneurs.

Table 3. Typology of Transnational Cultural Entrepreneurs in Transclave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ethnic</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Franchise</th>
<th>Creative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Koreatown</td>
<td>Koreatown</td>
<td>Koreatown/ non-Koreatown</td>
<td>Outside Koreatown (few near/in Koreatown)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Franchise</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

165
Note: some restaurants are still located in or near Koreatown, such as Gaonnuri and Hangawi, despite the fact that they do not necessarily want to be related to typical Koreatown business.

Types of business that Korean immigrants in New York City run include green groceries, laundromats, nail salons, liquor stores, and convenience stores, particularly in minority neighborhoods. However, I only included entrepreneurs in the entertainment and consumption service sector, such as restaurants, bakeries, bars, cosmetics and hair salons. I did not include these in the typology because these businesspeople are not necessarily transnational, and do not typically represent their ethnic and national symbols in their business in the way that those I included in my sample bring Korean-style consumer culture to Koreatown. I also did not include wholesalers in the Korean Business District in Manhattan. Although their business practices are transnational, as they imported goods from South Korea and sold them in the American market in the 1970s and the 80s, they did not necessarily engage in cultural entrepreneurship.

**Ethnic Entrepreneurs**

The first group are typical immigrant entrepreneurs opening small retail/service firms catering the traditional immigrants; ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ is adapted from “ethnic enterprises,” in Landolt, Autler and Baires (1999: p296). The scale of business is relatively small, catering
mostly to members of the ethnic community, though non-co-ethnic consumers are now slowly being included. This includes Koreatown old timers, who have owned one or more stores in Koreatown since the 1980s, prior to its mainstream discovery; it also includes those who immigrated earlier and worked at or owned stores elsewhere but eventually opened stores in Koreatown. The owner of the oldest restaurant on 32nd Street\textsuperscript{85} reminisces on how his business was not very successful initially:

\begin{quote}
I had to close on Sundays because I did not have many customers. Now I do close it on Sundays [as a Christian to offer it to God] because my business is doing well.
- An owner of N restaurant and participant in the Business Association of 32nd Street
\end{quote}

As he remembers, in the late 1970s and early ’80s he was not very successful because dining in Korean restaurants was limited to co-ethnic members (e.g. Korean immigrants and their children). These entrepreneurs do not necessarily directly transmit South Korea’s contemporary culture to Koreatown; instead, they rely heavily on cultural understanding and memory from the Korea they left and tend not to adopt new cuisine trends that have developed more recently in South Korea. Some change their menus by adding and highlighting items such as indoor BBQ that newer customers (mostly non-Koreans) prefer, or try to incorporate new, trendy Korean cuisines, but overall the dining options at the restaurants owned by ethnic entrepreneurs are largely considered out of fashion by Korean nationals. They generally offer all different kinds of

\textsuperscript{85} He opened his first restaurant on 27th Street in 1979, and moved to 32nd Street in 1982. His restaurant is the oldest on 32nd Street. At the time of my interview, he was involved in his own business, a representative of the Business Association of 32nd Street, and participated in the food globalization committee. However, in November 2013, he closed his business and sold the entire building to other owners of Korean restaurants on 32nd Street.
Korean dishes at one restaurant that is not attractive to Korean customers. Koreatown diners might share Pajun (scallion pancakes) or Japchae (sweet potato noodles with vegetables) as an appetizer and follow with Jjigae (soup), Bibimbap and Korean style BBQ; however, this is rare in South Korea and not very popular when dining out, as most popular restaurants have few specialized menus. During my interviews with Korean nationals, most pointed out not only the outdated physical appearance of the restaurants, but also the absence of specialties and the taste of the food, constantly comparing Koreatown restaurants to those in South Korea, particularly Seoul. Most favored Chodanggol on 35th Street, specializing in tofu dishes, because for Korean nationals, the restaurant provides the most authentic food experience. An ethnic entrepreneur admitted during an interview that the first generation restaurant owners, particularly old-timers like herself, “are stuck in the time when they left Korea, and find it hard to keep up with South Korean trends.”

However, some ethnic entrepreneurs in Koreatown promptly adopt transnational consumer trends as they permeate Koreatown, thereby extending their customers base outside of the community. For instance, an old-fashioned franchise bakery, Koryodang, which closed in 2012 and was immediately turned into another Korean franchise bakery by the same owner did not initially reflect Korean trends. In Korea, this franchise was popular in the 1990s, but disappeared by the 2000s except in a few smaller towns; they specialized in old-fashioned buns and breads. More recently, European-style bakeries adopted from Japan and emphasizing pastries and cakes are now very popular, particularly those with Ecole De Patisserie De Tokyo graduates. At the time of our interview, in 2009, the Koryedang owner had six franchise bakeries. He told me that he did not plan to adapt the European style bakery highlighting pastries, like Paris...
Baguette; this was the time when Paris Baguette became extremely successful in Flushing but not yet in Koreatown. When I saw his kitchen, one Japanese patissier and a few Latino assistants were making Korean/Japanese style baked goods. Yet two years later, he replace Korye
dang with Tous Les Jours on 32nd Street, the second most popular franchise brand in South Korea.

The owner of Koryedang is now a “new entrepreneur,” who relies on immigrants eager to consume cultural goods from their home country, but are also heavily dependent on non-Korean consumers. It is striking that many of these business owners will travel to Korea to learn of business trends in Seoul and bring it to New York. The owner of Koryedang who owns multiple stores, including a Korean franchise bakery, Tous Les Jours, a bbq restaurant and a Red Mango, both on 32nd Street and in other Koreatowns in New York, states: “I know Seoul way better now than before I left Korea. Seriously, I know all the streets in Gangnam [because I often go to business trip].” He even brought all the materials for the bakery interior from Korea to reflect Seoul trends.

Likewise, an owner of K restaurant, who used to work at several Korean restaurants in Koreatown and later opened two restaurants on 32nd Street (one operated by her daughter), said: “I go to Korea almost every season to see the trend. There is clearly trend in food, depending on economic situations and seasons. I should learn it.” This reflects not only a general change in Koreatown from a Korean-centered ethnic enclave to non-Korean consumer-based transclave, but also that South Korea has emerged as a major cultural innovator through Hallyu products, apparent in Asia since the early 2000s and slowly extending to North America.

See Landolt, Autler and Baires, from their work on Salvadoran immigrants in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. (1999; p296).
New Entrepreneurs

Newcomers to Koreatown, mostly recent immigrants, are also “new entrepreneurs”, because they directly convey popular trends in South Korea to New York City. The owners of a hair salon are two such entrepreneurs. Although they worked at luxurious hair salons in Seoul catering to entertainers, the financial crisis pushed them to leave Korea. One co-owner explains, “honestly, IMF [financial crisis of 1997] was a critical moment for us to plan to move. We were planning to open a shop in Seoul, but we decided to go somewhere else.” New York was attractive for them due to business opportunities:

When art meets business, it makes money. …. I think back then [when we began to plan to move into New York about 7-8 years ago] New York was not really a center of fashion trend, but more the transition for fashion trend from Europe to New York. So we did not entirely move here but saw how it would be like here in New York for two years.”
-A co-owner of K hair salon

Moving due to financial crises and new economic opportunities is common; however, rather than entirely move to New York, these new entrepreneurs often allow themselves time to adopt a new business environment by working and observing enclave business. After the husband spent a couple of years in New York working at a hair salon in Koreatown, his wife joined him in New York; they finally took over the shop from the previous owner in mid-2000.

I used to work here [at the hair salon as a hair dresser before they bought the shop]. And I always wonder how come these people could not do well in this great location. .. I mean the earlier generation hair dresser [the owner – a typical immigrant entrepreneur]. We did wedding hair together; the owner took photos. The owner told us if we could give it a try
because he [or she; not identifiable from the interview] thought we could do well. This was like a gambling.

- A co-owner (husband) of K hair salon

Such a cautious strategy is very different from that of earlier Korean immigrants who moved permanently to the U.S with all their assets. The old version of the American dream that the earlier immigrants pursue does not exist in the same way for these newcomers. During my fieldwork at an ESL school on 35th Street -- one of many extensions of Koreatown -- I often heard from the staff members that the owner, who first came to New York as a language student but later migrated for small business investment, and is still on an investment visa, talked of returning to Korea if his business did not work in the way he expected. Likewise, a yogurt café owner on East 32nd Street who took over the store from an immigrant entrepreneur has slowly moved to New York; he visited New York several times, and worked at the store during his short visits. Interestingly, his transnational activity has drawn from past experiences as a consumer in Seoul; he developed menus with his Korean staff, distinguishing himself from rivals Pink Berry and Red Mango.

Patbingsu (shaved ice with red bean paste) is a good example. It’s pretty popular on 32nd Street nowadays. .. Back then [before 2010] there was only one bakery [which was closed in 2012] that sold Patbingsu. Theirs were crappy … I decided to develop my own with a part-time staff [a Korean national]…by remembering the taste and style in Seoul [as a consumer a couple of years ago]. … Waffles are another example. Here in the U.S., waffles are not really considered as dessert unlike Korea [where you eat either Belgium
style or American waffles with ice-cream, whipping-cream, chocolate syrup and fruits on
the top as a dessert]. … You know Samchungdong-style waffles.  
- An owner of a frozen yogurt store on 32nd Street

Despite active cultural adaptation to enhance his business, the owner of the yogurt shop
reflects the most current trends in South Korea. The menus in his shop, developed with a young
Korean national in her early 20s, clearly reflects his memory of Seoul as a consumer. In this
sense, Koreatown continues to function as a gateway for those who do not fully understand
American customers and lack English language skills, as it did for earlier immigrants. Yet as
many interviewees point out, it was not always their preference to go into business in
Koreatown. When the hair salon owners began their business, they disagreed on whether to open
a store in Koreatown; the wife insisted on starting from scratch outside Koreatown, while the
husband wanted to take over his boss’s shop and move out later; their lack of language skills and
lesser familiarity with American culture led them to stay in Koreatown.

Interestingly, while traditional ethnic entrepreneurs are the least transnational group in
terms of how they observe, adapt and convey contemporary trend in South Korea, they are
highly transnational in that they work most closely with South Korean government agencies.
Those who most actively participate in the EUSKCGC, as representatives or active members, are
mostly old timers; these ethnic entrepreneurs have operated enclave business for decades and
understand the niche market well, and, having immigrated as adults unable to join the U.S.
mainstream due to language barriers and racial discrimination. Yet unlike ethnic entrepreneurs,

87 Samchungdong is one of the most popular neighborhoods in Seoul among people in their 20s
and 30s; it did not become a consumption neighborhood until the 2000s; the neighborhood is
known as where old Seoul meets new Seoul.
new entrepreneurs are the least active participants in the nation branding project, as they focus on settling down in business and rely on their fresh experience of Korean culture as Korean nationals.

**Corporations and Franchise**

The interest Korean corporations based in South Korea have in expanding to and engaging with Koreatown shows that the space is *not just ethnic, but transnational*, replicating South Korea’s trendy culture for a larger, U.S. market. Large *Chabols*, such as Samsung, Hyundai and LG, have directly targeted American customers for many years; smaller corporations, however, have not traditionally been focused on the U.S. market, or do not present their Koreanness as part of their brand image because of negative ideas about South Korean products. Yet around 2010, several such corporations opened outlets in New York City to establish bridgeheads for market expansion. The investors could be corporations that prefer direct investment by establishing U.S. branches. Alternatively, some corporations decided to closely work with American entrepreneurs who better understand the U.S. market; Korean American entrepreneurs often fill this role due to the relatively lower language and cultural barriers between two parties.

As explained in chapter 3, Korean franchises use Koreatown as a stepping-stone to expand their business targeting non-Korean consumers. As of late 2015, there were various types of Korean franchises on 32nd Street, most of which opened outlet in 2010 or later, including chicken eateries (Kyochon and Bonchon), bakeries, cafes and dessert places (Paris Baguette and 88 They tend to engage in larger nation branding projects, as shown in Chapter 2, such as sports events.
Tous Les Jours, Caffé Bene and Red Mango), cosmetics (Tony Moly, the Faceshop, the Mask Bar), and restaurants (Jongro BBQ, Yupki Ddukboikki, Kang Ho Dong Baekjeong).

These franchise stores are not direct participants in the globalization of the Korean Food project in New York City, and none of these franchises participated in EUSKCGC, unlike enclave entrepreneurs who aimed to promote their business through the public-private partnership. Unlike larger Korean corporations, such as Samsung, LG electronics and Hyundai automobiles, that do not present nationality in their brands, these franchises actively represent Koreanness in order to attract Hallyu fans and underscore the authenticity of their products.

**Figure 24. Advertisements at the Faceshop in Koreatown**

*Photos by the author.*
Cosmetic brands often hire Korean models, mostly Hallyu stars, targeting the international market. The Face Shop, a low-to-mid-end cosmetic brand (or, so-called “road shop cosmetic brands” or “one-brand shops” in South Korea), owned by a mega corporation, LG Household & Health Care, displays posters with one of the most popular Hallyu stars, Soo-hyun Kim. Soo-hyun Kim, a famous actor in Asia, particularly in China, was hired to specifically target and attract Hallyu fans elsewhere in Asia and abroad. A female idol, Suji, was hired for the domestic market. As seen Figure 24, the Face Shop on 32nd Street, displays ads and posters featuring Soo-hyun Kim to attract non-Korean consumers, particularly non-Korean Asians. The products and interior of the store, however, matches that of any other Face Shop store in South Korea.

Likewise, Korean bakeries, such as Paris Baguette and Tous Les Jours, maintain the same menus over long periods of time, as newer Korean items often take a while to arrive in New York, and do not always localize products to New York City tastes.

Yet in Seoul, government agencies actively collaborate with and sponsor these franchises. The Ministry of Knowledge Economy (MKE) and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) kicked off an initiative, entitled “Supporting project for the first overseas outlet opening for the Korean franchise,” that selected 13 franchises, including Mr. Pizza and Kraze Burgers, and granted about $20,000 to each in 2010 (KOTRA 2010). The target cities, chosen by the grant winners, were mostly concentrated in Asian markets, such as Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Hanoi, Manila and Jakarta, but also included Los Angeles and Paris. Likewise, the KFF and the aT Center, both under the MFAFF, have encouraged relatively small- and medium-size franchises to pursue overseas market development. For
example, the aT Center supported Korean franchises that participated in franchise expos abroad, and called for applications from relatively small Korean franchises with more than 10 outlets that were seeking overseas investment opportunities, and covered their booth rental fees and interpretation at the International Franchise Expo, sponsored by the International Franchise Association and hosted by MFV Expositions at the Javits Center in New York City (The aT Center 2012).

**Creative Entrepreneurs Outside Koreatown**

Unlike nationally recognized Asian cuisines such as Chinese, Japanese and Thai, most Korean restaurants in the New York-New Jersey area are found in Koreatowns; Manhattan is no exception. Though some Korean food and cheap light snacks are available outside Koreatown, particularly at restaurants and delis owned and/or run by Koreans, Korean food has yet to become a common sight. However, some entrepreneurs and chefs intentionally open upscale restaurants outside of Koreatown in New York City, separating themselves from the enclave and appealing to non-Koreans who like high-end dining experiences, in order to introduce Korean cuisine to gourmet omnivores within the context of what the Korean media calls “the second generation of Korean restaurant business” (Kim 2014): Woo Lae Oak in Soho, Danji and Bann in Hell’s Kitchen, Hanjan in the Flatiron District, and Jungsik in Tribeca are good examples. The entrepreneurs or chefs who own their restaurants are typically ethnic Koreans. Korean American David Chang and Angelo Sosa adapt Korean cuisine, yet their restaurants are not necessarily identified as Korean. David Chang and Angelo Sosa’s respective restaurants are considered fusion rather than Korean, yet one could feel the Koreanness; “although a hamburger is
American it was inspired by Korean food,” as an owner of Angelo Sosa’s Social Eatz told the first lady, Yoonok Kim, during her visit to Danji (Reddy 2011). A few upscale Korean restaurants are located in or near Koreatown, such as 2012 Michelin Guide Recommended HanGawi, and Gaonnuri on the 39th floor of 1250 Broadway, yet they differentiate themselves from traditional Korean restaurants, charging higher prices and offering an upscale atmosphere.

The personal backgrounds that led these restaurateurs to the industry are diverse. Young Sook Choi, the owner of Woo Lae Oak and Bann, is a first generation Korean immigrant who came to California in 1976. Taking over her mother-in-law’s restaurant business, she opened her first restaurant in 1984 in Beverly Hills in L.A., and expanded to New York with Woo Lae Oak in Soho in 1999 and Bann in Hell’s Kitchen in 2005, clearly targeting non-Korean customers (Cho 2010). Other chef-owners of fine dining establishments trained in New York’s mainstream restaurants. Hooni Kim and David Chang are second generation Korean Americans; neither Kim nor Chang came from culinary backgrounds, but both attended the French Culinary Institute and were trained in French and Japanese cuisines.89 Kim clearly identifies his business as Korean, while Chang is somewhat more pan-Asian.90 In 2006, Chang said in an interview with Asiance

89 Before founding their business, Kim worked at Daniel and Masa, and Chang worked at Jean-Georges Vongerichten, Daniel Boulud and Tom Colicchio restaurants.
90 David Chang, who may be the most famous Korean American chef in the nation, did not actively participate in the project; however, his position in the culinary world is somewhat different, because he does not necessarily identify himself as a Korean chef who cooks Korean food; rather he pursues a more pan-Asian cuisine, as in his first restaurant, Momofuku noodle bar, serving Japanese style noodles. He also offers fusion Korean food at other restaurants, including his second restaurant, Momofuku Ssam bar. Chang’s success with the Momofuku restaurants in New York, Toronto and Sydney, garnered him nominations for prominent awards; these included awards from Food & Wine and Bon Appétit magazines, in addition to profiles in The New Yorker and Gourmet magazines. He was nominated multiple times for awards by the James Beard Foundation; he won three times, for Rising Star Chef of the Year (2006), Best Chef, New York City (2008) and Rising Star Chef of the Year (2012). Ssäm Bar has been named
Magazine, “I love and enjoy eating Korean food. But when it comes to cooking, I don't want to duplicate traditional cooking, so I have my own Americanized version of dishes” (Hyun 2006). However, more recently, with the increasing popularity of Korean food in New York, Chang also responded more actively to market demand, though one of his restaurants, Momofuku Ssäm Bar, has provided Korean-inspired fusion food since 2006. In 2015, the Momofuku, owned by Chang, released a Korean Chili-Based 'Ssäm Sauce, produced by the Momofuku Culinary Lab in Brooklyn (Suddath 2015). On the other hand, Jungsik Yim, who opened Jungsik in Tribeca, is a Korean national who made his name in Seoul as a rising star chef; he was not trained in Korean cuisine, but attended the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), and has worked at David Bouley in Tribeca and at Akelare in Spain.

All are involved in the Globalization of Korean Food projects in different ways. Rather than directly participating in the EUSKCGC, whose main members are all Korean-speaking entrepreneurs, they transmit Korean cuisine less by participating in a community effort than by showcasing their individual creativity. The chefs and owners of these fine dining establishments, as culinary transmitters, differentiate themselves from Koreatown entrepreneurs who often execute business strategies in a Korean way in terms of dining style, food, and staff. To localize new food within New York’s culinary scene, they exclusively target upscale urban foodies, and hire English-speaking staff -- not necessarily ethnic Koreans -- to communicate with their customers. At the workshop at the Korea Society on October 24th, 2012, Hooni Kim of Danji and one of S. Pellegrino World’s 50 Best Restaurants since 2009. Momofuku Ko has two Michelin stars since 2009. Ko is listed on the S. Pellegrino World’s Best Restaurants. For more details, see his biography at http://momofuku.com/wp-content/files_mf/davidchangbio.pdf
Hanjan said that he is the only Korean at Danji. A former manager at one of these restaurants confirmed that his boss intentionally hired more English-speaking staff in order to satisfy customers who liked to converse with staff by asking questions about food and ingredients and shared cultural codes; he was the only Korean of the three managers, and the service staff, largely English speakers, were educated in Korean food after being hired (Interview with a former manager of W restaurant).

These owners and chefs recreate Korean food by developing new fusion dishes based on their professional experiences with French, Japanese, and Spanish cuisines. For instance, Jungsik offers French-style course menus on Western style plates, rather than present all the dishes at once. Hooni Kim of Danji serves tapas-style fusion Korean food on small plates; he appreciates Western-style course dining because it gives chefs the opportunity to tell stories and introduce ideas to foodies, a critical difference from Korean cuisine.

I think it's just the difference between Korean versus Western world. Western world expects food to be coming out in courses. … That has to be in an order. Just at Danji. It does not have to be. It helps. .. 18 course dinner that I have told a story…. You throw everything at one time, in my experience, the person dining in front of me could have completely different experience. As a chef we do not want that. We want to be more in control. …. Koreans expect to eat everything at the same time, because Koreans expect dinner in 45 minutes and leave, whereas in Europe and the US we're paying 500 dollars, three hundred dollars. We expect three hours. That’s cultural difference.

- Hooni Kim, a chef and owner of Danji and Hanjan; at the workshop at the Korea Society, October 24th, 2012

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91 The workshop video is available at the Korea Society’s website at http://www.koreasociety.org/special-events/young-professionals/an_evening_with_hooni_kim_chef-owner_of_danji.html
Similarly, they also modify the way they serve side dishes. Generally, banchan (side-dishes) are all included with the main dishes at average Korean restaurants; various banchan offered at restaurants often show signs of generosity in Korean culture. Yet these restaurants limit the number of banchan -- sometimes causing customers used to Korean-style dining style to complain. As a former manage at W restaurant said, “serving plenty of banchan is how Koreatown works, but we do not.”

Although they recreate cuisine and localize it in a New York context, they emphasize their maintenance of authenticity in transmitting Korean cuisine. Hooni Kim discusses his experience in cooking French food at Daniel:

[At Daniel] I saw these French cooks cooking French food that was more than technique, flavor, and taste. It was they were cooking who they were... the history, heritage. That's the pride that they had. More than just the technique. What I realized earlier on was I may have been as good as be cooking French food, compared to them, I was sort of like a pretender. I can't never understand cooking French food as much as they can. .. They're cooking at three years old, by looking at their mothers and grandmothers cooking. They lived in. I can sort of make taste good, maybe taste as good as theirs, but I think they have more. That's why I started cooking Korean food. I sort of wanted to have that pride.

- Hooni Kim, chef and owner of Danji and Hanjan; at the workshop at the Korea Society, October 24th, 2012

As Chef Jungsik Yim said at a press interview in 2011 just before opening his first restaurant in New York, the path should differ from that of early pioneers: “I’d like to be recognized in New York’s culinary scene with a new concept of Korean food and become a stepping stone for globalization of Korean food (Kim 2011).” Through offering good quality
authentic food, these entrepreneurs transmit and practice their own culture despite the Western ‘clothing’ and tendency towards fusion cuisine.

**Korea-related Organizations**

Korea-related organizations are mediators in the process of nation branding in general and Koreatown in particular. The Korea Society in New York City is one of two organizations that have closely worked on Korea-related issues. Unlike KCS New York, under the control of the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea and MCST, the Korea Society is a non-profit organization; founded in 1993, its leadership depends heavily on U.S. citizens.\(^\text{92}\)

The Society’s workshops and projects range from current political issues on the Korean peninsula to Korean culture. To introduce Korean culture to the American public, they offer Korean classes, cultural tours to students and teachers, Project Bridge,\(^\text{93}\) exhibitions, movie screenings, performing arts, and Korean cuisine. Since 2009, Korean cuisine has been underscored as a popular resource for Korean culture in the organization. By using social media,

\(^\text{92}\) Although The Korea Society was officially established in 1993, its roots trace back to 1957, when General James A. Van Fleet, who commanded the U.S. armed forces in the final phase of the Korean War, and other Americans formed the first Korea-oriented non-profit organization in the United States. The Society succeeds several organizations, particularly the U.S.-Korea Society in New York and the U.S.-Korea Foundation in Washington, D.C. The organization has been led primarily by U.S. diplomats to Korea. Currently, Mark C. Minton, a distinguished former foreign service officer, and Thomas C. Hubbard, a former U.S. ambassador to Korea, serve as president and chairman of the board, respectively. For further information, see [http://www.koreasociety.org](http://www.koreasociety.org)

\(^\text{93}\) The Korea Society and Pacific Century Institute select 16 public high school students, called Youth Ambassadors, from New York and Los Angeles. The project, largely funded by the Korea Foundation, was initially devised to understand and bridge the gap between cultures since the 1992 L.A. riots. These selected students, largely racial and economic minorities, have bi-weekly workshops and go to Korea for ten days.
public media and word of mouth, the staff develop programs; the staff often posts things related to Korean to see what the public responds to, while the New York Times is considered a good resource on opinions among non-Korean New Yorkers. Korean cuisine projects have included book launches, cooking demonstrations, and talks with chefs.

One of the programs captivating audiences was a series of events with Marja Vongerichten on PBS’ documentary series, *Kimchi Chronicles*, consisting of a talk about the documentary’s making on May 3, 2011, and a cooking demonstration on August 4, 2011, when her cookbook was released.

Part 1 was more about production side. We invited a filmmaker and Marja and they explained how they made this documentary. We show the first episode even before it was aired on TV. Part 2 was when her cookbook came out. She also did cooking demonstrations.

- Non-Korean staff member at the Korea Society

The story of a biracial Korean adoptee’s journey to her motherland with her husband, Jean-Georges, to discover Korean food, the documentary attracted not only Koreans but also non-Korean audiences. Despite the Society’s relative inexperience with cuisine-related events, these events effectively succeeded in bridging two nations, as expected in a non-profit organization of its type. Although the Korea Society is “a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) organization with individual and corporate members”, as stated on their website, the organization has been always deeply related to Korean government and Korean corporations in several ways. The leadership of the organization has been mostly U.S. diplomats to South Korea or other Asian countries and political scientists. Most importantly, their funding is deeply
dependent on the Korea Foundation under Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Korean mega-corporations such as SK, Samsung and Hyundai.  

We do have many sponsors, such as Korean Foundation and many corporations. We do not get funded for the specific events. We do have fund, but it is not for specific events… SK specifically wanted to associate with young professional workshops.

-Non-Korean staff member at Korea Society

Rather than directly invest in relatively smaller food projects, *chaebols* tend to generally sponsor the foundation. Smaller-scale events draw attention to the small corporations behind the chaebols which plan to target American mainstream; the events with Marja Vongerichten were largely sponsored by smaller corporations, although the series of documentaries were funded by larger corporations. Indeed, the first event was suggested by a staff member of Amore Pacific, a Korean cosmetic company interested in brand promotion in the United States:

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94 Their website displays the logos of the major sponsors; Pantech, Hanwha, Posco, OCI, Tong Yang Group, LG, Samsung, the Korea Foundation, SK, Hyundai, GS Caltex, Tiger Asia Management, and the Freeman Foundation. These sponsors are Korea-based mega corporations, with the exception of the foundations and Tiger Asia Management, a New York-based hedge fund run by a Korean American, Bill Hwang. Some individual events were sponsored by relatively smaller corporations, such as Amore Pacific, Pulmoowon and CJ.

95 The website for Kimchi Chronicles (http://www.kimchichronicles.tv/) categorizes their sponsors as underwriters or supporters based on the level of financial investment. Three of the four major sponsors are Korea-based public and private organizations: Visit Korea Committee, Korean Food Foundation, and Samsung. The fourth is H-Mart, a Korean food supply chain in the United States. Smaller supporters are largely Korean corporations in Korea; others include CJ, Hite, Jinro, Amore Pacific, Korean Air, the Westin Chosun, Yido, All-Clad, Cuisinart, John Boos, Le Creuset.

96 For 2011, according to Financial Supervisory Service, Amore Pacific’s market share in Korea was 32.7% (Yim 2013). Amore Pacific entered the American market by supplying Sulwhasoo, Korea’s leading premium herbal medicine brand, to Bergdorf Goodman in 2010.
It was the woman from Amore Pacific. They wanted to promote their brand. She mentioned that she just involved in the programs. It was before the show was firstly on air. So we thought it was really fascinating.

-Non-Korean staff member at the Korea Society

The second event, “A Taste of The Kimchi Chronicles: Korean Cooking for an American Kitchen”, was sponsored largely by Korean corporations.

For the Astor Center program [the second event], CJ sponsored. They sponsored Kimchi Chronicles so the filmmaker gave us their contact, so we could get some sponsorship. Pulmoowon also sponsored. They contacted us.

-Non-Korean staff member at the Korea Society

CJ and Pulmoowon are well-known food companies that export goods to the U.S., particularly to Asian markets. For those two companies, such events are an opportunity to promote their brand at the undiscovered market. Yet a non-Korean corporation, Whole Foods Market, also sponsored the event, to enhance their ethnic marketing and increase their cachet as gourmet food purveyors.

We did a cooking show at Whole Foods at Bowery. Because we can’t really do cooking shows here [at the office], we looked for another option. We contacted but they did it all. People provide a space and ingredients. … There is a Chinese American chef, who is generally interested in Asian cuisine, so it was not really hard to work with them.

- Non-Korean staff member at the Korea Society

The Chinese chef and his company were pleased to provide space and ingredients for the event; for the Korea Society, collaborating with Whole Food Markets allowed for wider audience outreach, not limiting themselves within their members and Korean nationals.
These events shows another form of nation branding efforts. Largely funded by Korea’s public foundations (the Korea Foundation) and the Chaebols and targeting the American mainstream, the Korean food project became a tool for corporate market expansion and for nation branding:

These corporations are mostly related to Korea in some ways; they want to network with White American society, state department or politics. Always their own interests are involved.
- Korean staff member at the Korea Society

Although the Korea Society’s is one of the most well-known overseas non-profit organizations dealing with Korea-related issues, their objectivity is questionable due to their financial dependency on the Korean government and chaebols. The Korea Society is regularly mentioned at the National Assembly. During the annual inspection of the MFA’s Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York, former and current Consuls report that Korea Society as a bridge for public relations regarding the nation’s policies; attendees often pay attention to the Korea Society’s political view and role in New York. Although the leadership holds that the organization should not practice South Korea’s propaganda as a non-profit organization, it is not always easy due to their funding situation.

**Narratives of Mediators on Koreatown**

When the First Lady, Yoon-ok Kim, visited New York in September 2011, she went to three restaurants for the Korean food project: Hooni Kim’s Danji in the Hell’s Kitchen, Angelo Sosa’s Social Eatz in Midtown, and Don’s Bogam on 32nd Street. Don’s Bogam is a relatively
fancy Korean BBQ restaurant compared to its competitors on 32nd Street, while Danji and Social Eatz are chef-owned restaurants; although the Korean government, working with Koreatown entrepreneurs, tried to recreate Koreatown as the cultural face of South Korea, these chefs were potentially useful partners as well.

Whether high-end chef-owners targeting cultural omnivores or ethnic business people assuming a base clientele of co-nationals, both benefit from working with Korean government agencies to promote Korean food in New York through nation branding strategies. The economic instability related to the financial crisis of 2008 in particular drove those entrepreneurs to seek alternative ways to promote business, most importantly without incurring too many extra costs. Although competition of course hinders collective efforts among Koreatown entrepreneurs, many found it necessary to unite behind a business-reviving strategy -- in this case, the promotion of “authentic Korean food” (Interview with an ethnic old-timer, the owner of K restaurant).

It was good timing: ethnic food was becoming much more popular in New York’s culinary scene as foodies sought untold culinary stories. Unlike other Asian cuisines (e.g. Japanese, Chinese, Thai) that have already permeated American dining culture, Korean food remained ‘undiscovered’, having served mostly for co-ethnics and some other Asians. However, as Asian and Asian American chefs such as David Chang (Momofuku Noodle Bar, opened 2004) and Masa Takayama (Masa, also 2004) found success in New York, Korean food had slowly begun to gain local media attention.
Different Approaches to the Branding Project

Despite the common goals of the various actors involved in the Korean food project in New York, they participate in and take advantage of the project in different ways, often depending on the expected profits. For non-Koreatown entrepreneurs, the project fits into a strategy of promoting Korean food as high-end ethnic cuisine; the KFF similarly sought to popularize high-end Korean food as trendy and healthy, particularly at the beginning of the project. As a staff member at the KFF said, “we know that two different types of Korean restaurants coexist in New York City. Some can lead food globalization, while some can’t” (Interview with a staff member at the KFF).” For the foundation, these high-end chefs and restaurant owners work towards popularizing Korean food as high-end along the lines of Japanese restaurants. Similarly, non-Koreatown entrepreneurs, who want to detach from ‘Koreatown rhetoric’ and separate themselves from typical ethnic enclave businesses, treat the project as an opportunity to highlight their mainstream experience in New York’s culinary scene; newcomers in particular seemed encouraged to expand their market outside of New York City by promoting themselves in Korean media.

David Chang is considered the most successful Korean chef in the U.S., due to the tremendous success of the Momofuku restaurant group in New York, Toronto and Sydney. He challenged the stereotypes of Asian Americans, who are often thought of as following professional careers such as lawyers and doctors; as Daniel Roberts from the Times said, “David Chang broke all the rules (Roberts 2013).” However, more media attention in South Korea went to the Korean chef Hooni Kim, who has worked closely with the Korean government; and Angelo Sosa, who is not ethnically Korean but cooks Asian fusion cuisine, and gained attention
for his Bibimbap burger, which was chosen best burger in America in a competition by eater.com.97

When Danji received one Michelin star in 2012, Hooni Kim immediately got attention not only from local media in New York City, but in Korean media, praising his success as the first “Korean restaurant” to win a Michelin star. “Danji captured New Yorkers’ hearts (Paik 2011); “he is the one practicing food globalization by fully filling his restaurants with customers (Lee 2011). As Hooni Kim said, “I want to bring my memory into my food, like something I ate whenever I visited my family in Korea as a kid.” Kim’s unique story--he was a medical school student whose career change led him to work at the Michelin three star restaurant Daniel, and later Masa--captivated many readers. The KFF and Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) promoted his success through news releases. At an interview with local media, a staff member of the Ministry promoted their project by saying that “the organization has exerted to promote Korean food and food professionals since 2009. Danji’s achievement proves that Korean food is finally positively getting acknowledged overseas (Kim 2011).”

Likewise, when Sosa’s bibimbap burger was designated the greatest burger in America during a competition for ‘burger week’ at Eater.com, Korean media reported on the win solely based on the press release by the MAFRA, applauding his menu as “the best burger that captivated New Yorker’s fastidious tastes (Kim 2011).” A non-Korean chef who was on the popular American show Top Chef, Sosa captivated Koreans’ attention. He was invited to Korea Food Week in 2011, held in Seoul, South Korea, between November 9 and 12; he hosted a cooking demonstration during his visit to shoot a 60-second spot on NBC’s Today show

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97 http://eater.com/archives/2011/05/02/social-eatz-winz.php#reader_comments
introducing Korea’s fermented food (Yoon 2011). Following this visit, he was invited to the Korean Table, an event at Columbia University organized by the Korean Graduate Student Association, to share his experience in traveling to Korea, together with Eddy Song of Korilla Truck and Kimchi Chronicle’s Marja Vongerichten (Lee 2011). The resulting media attention led to his involvement with BBC, a Korean fried chicken franchise, as an advisor for a new U.S.-geared menu (Lee 2012). He even did a cooking show on October 6, 2013, although Social Eatz closed March 1 of that year.

The success of Jungsik in Tribeca also thrilled many Koreans. The restaurant received one Michelin star in 2012, coming after Danji’s star in 2011, and two in 2013. The Korean media was proud to report that Korean-born chefs were finally winning over New York City with authentic, local, yet modernized fusion Korean food (Jungang Sunday October 13, 2013). Jungsik Yim, a well-known star chef in South Korea (he earned the nickname Idol of Apgujung), was not directly involved in the food project; more recently, however, Yim engaged in a workshop and forum on Korean food with the KFF in Korea, Global Korea Gastronomy, held on March 3, 2014, in Singapore (KFF 2014) and Luncheon for the First Ladies, provided by the MAFRA and KFF at ASEAN-Republic of KOREA Commemorative Summit, on December 12, 2014, in Busan. He has also participated in discourse on Korean food and globalization of Korean food through numerous press interviews: “we hardly eat royal food. I agree with that the more Korean the more global. The most important thing is that something Korean is just around us. … Basically if Koreans think the food is delicious, non-Koreans would agree on this. That’s the most Korean, and the most global (Kim 2013).”

98 Apgujung is an upscale neighborhood of Seoul, South Korea.
However, Koreatown entrepreneurs have a different perspective on the food globalization project. Koreatown entrepreneurs, particularly traditional entrepreneurs, are the most active group working with government agencies, especially in organizing the Eastern United States Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee on April 11, 2012; from the beginning, Koreatown entrepreneurs were deeply involved in this committee.\footnote{To see the main members of this committee, visit their website at http://newyork.hansik.org/us/index.do. The first and second (current) presidents are owners of restaurants in Manhattan’s Koreatown.} Not only did they emphasize the authenticity of their food, they attempt to reinvent Koreatown to reflect better upon them (e.g. calling for a Koreatown banner and better street cleaning)\footnote{They have called for hanging a ‘Koreaway’ banner on 32nd Street and Broadway, and have collected donations and negotiated with the local government; likewise, after organizing the Business Association of 32nd Street in 2009, they asked entrepreneurs on 32nd Street for donations and participation to clean up the street and decorate Christmas trees in Koreatown (Cho 2010).} (Cho 2010). For Koreatown entrepreneurs, Koreatown symbolizes a space where authentic Korean culture is intensively commercialized, and where Korea-related small businesses or franchises are most successful. Restaurant and food business owners are particularly aware of this; half of the stores on the first floor of the buildings on 32nd Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway are occupied by food-related businesses, as storefronts occupied by non-food businesses are consistently replaced with restaurants and food stores (Kim 2013).

Food producers and distributors thus also participate in the branding project in Koreatown. The food producers and distributors do not directly invest in Koreatown by opening their flagship stores, yet the corporations are prominent within the Koreatown business district in part through their donation of products when Korean entrepreneurs hold food related events:

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99 To see the main members of this committee, visit their website at http://newyork.hansik.org/us/index.do. The first and second (current) presidents are owners of restaurants in Manhattan’s Koreatown.

100 They have called for hanging a ‘Koreaway’ banner on 32nd Street and Broadway, and have collected donations and negotiated with the local government; likewise, after organizing the Business Association of 32nd Street in 2009, they asked entrepreneurs on 32nd Street for donations and participation to clean up the street and decorate Christmas trees in Koreatown (Cho 2010).
Look at Sony. Japanese mega corporations have been pretty active in the promotion of Japanese culture… They [mega corporations] do not donate for the events [organized by Korean entrepreneurs in New York]… Smaller food producers and distributors, such as Nongshim and Binggrae, do.
- An owner of K restaurant and representative of the EUSKCGC

For Nongshim and Binggrae,¹ food manufacturers in South Korea, it is logical to participate in events this way for the advertising effect and to attract potential customers. Nongshim has been fairly successful in the U.S. with their instant noodles (e.g. cup noodles and Shin ramen), not only in Korean grocery stores but also Chinese and American stores and wholesalers such as COSTCO and Wal-Mart. In New York City especially, it is not difficult to find one or two kinds of Nongshim instant noodles at stores such as Key Food; many Chinese grocery stores have entire sections for Nongshim noodles. Their revenue in the U.S. market was $160 million (38% of their exports) in 2011.

These transnational entrepreneurs have maintained ties with their home country, whether direct or indirect; this allows them to play the role of mediators who connect South Korea’s top-down policies to bottom-up customers within a transclave, by reinventing the space as more transnational. Although the Korean food project was mostly led by entrepreneurs who have restaurants or other food-related businesses, other entrepreneurs, such as hair salon owners, accessory shop owners and cosmetic stores, have found that the popularity of Korean culture and

¹ Nongshim and Binggrae are processed food manufacturers in South Korea; Nongshim is the largest food manufacturer, specializing in instant noodles and snacks, while Binggrae is a daily product producer. Nongshim’s instant noodles claimed a 70% market share in Korea in 2013 (Munhwa 04/24/2003). The company began to export instant noodles to the U.S. in 1971, established a U.S. branch in 1984, and set up a factory in L.A.
food entices more consumers and benefits business by creating a positive urban image of Koreatown as a cool and young neighborhood; as one of the traditional Korean entrepreneurs emphasizes, the place matters for the aggregate benefits: “people should come here [Koreatown]. ... Those restaurants that are not in Koreatown [Woo Rae Ok\textsuperscript{102} and Bann] are not doing well. They definitely should come, because people gather here” (Interview with K restaurant owner and participant in the Business Association).

Yet a number of non-Korean chef-owners do not necessarily identify with Koreatown or even want to associate with Koreatown businesses. As a manager at Woo Rae Ok recalls, opening business in Soho, once the most trendy neighborhood, was a good alternative to the negative image of the ethnic enclave as unclean and limited to the co-ethnic group. Similarly, Hooni Kim aggressively differentiates himself from “traditional stereotypical Koreatown restaurants,” although the KoreaDaily reported that increasingly high rent in Koreatown led Kim to open his first restaurant on 52\textsuperscript{nd} Street (Yonhap 2012).

When I was cooking at other people's kitchens, especially at Daniel, … the French cook asked me where should I eat Korean food. I would say "buy a ticket and go to Korea" … I can’t recommend that restaurant where using MSG, because of that, that was difficult to recommend any Korean restaurants [in Koreatown]. … but traditionally everywhere outside of Korea, you don't really experience very expensive proper Korean restaurants, because you don't know chefs cooking Korean food outside of Korea. It's all of business.

-Hooni Kim, a chef and owner of Danji and Hanjan at a workshop at the Korea Society, October 24, 2012

\textsuperscript{102} Woo Rae Ok closed in 2011 due to financial difficulties.
Although he believes (or diplomatically states) that “Korean food is still good, when it's cheap”, his approach to the restaurant business as a chef-owner is distinct. Authentic, non-mass produced ingredients imported from Korea are key in his food philosophy (Park 2014).

The Korean American owner of Social Eatz also disagrees with Koreatown restaurant rhetoric, as Hooni Kim does, but also counters Hooni Kim’s thoughts on “authentic Korean food”. Bobby Kwak owns a well-known Korean/Asian club on 41st Street, The Circle; in an interview with Korean Beacon in 2011, a web magazine that features various Korean Americans’ stories, he talks about Korean food as an investor and owner of Sosa’s Social Eatz:

I don’t think that 32nd street traditional Korean food creates a pleasant first experience for non familiar eaters mainly because it’s too authentic. Dishes like kalbi, bibimbap, and bulgogi are no-brainers and everybody loves them, but dishes like dwenjang jjigae (stew made with soybean paste) and daegu maewoon tang (codfish stew) may scare first timers away from Korean food for good. My idea with Social Eatz was to slowly introduce Korean flavors and dishes to the American public by giving them a sense of comfort. Knowing that burgers, sandwiches, and salads were staples for most of my American friends growing up, I just decided to use the same types of foods but give it a Korean spin.

-Bobby Kwak, an owner of the Circle and Social Eatz

For both Bobby Kwak and Hooni Kim, the presentation of Korean food in an American way -- essentially, putting Korean food in American clothing, like Sosa’s Bibimbap burger or Hooni Kim’s Bulgogi sliders -- is the most efficient way to attract non-Korean customers and present chefs’ creativity. Yet Bobby Kwak believes that some Koreatown dishes are too unfamiliar and ‘authentic’ to attract non-Korean diners, while Hooni Kim constantly emphasizes the importance of authenticity of Korean food. However, both want to distinguish themselves from other “traditional Koreatown restaurants.”
Interestingly, with the recent Korean-food fever in New York, Kwak later opened a Korean BBQ restaurant, Kang Ho Dong Baekjeong, with Joe Ko in December, 2014 in Manhattan’s Koreatown. This does not mean that Kwak and his business partner, Ko, followed the first-generation Koreatown entrepreneurs’ path, in which “many […] haven't changed their sourcing methods to reflect changing palates” (Lee 2015), according to the Village Voice.

**Figure 25. Kang Ho Dong Baekjeong in Koreatown**

Photos by the author.

Though this BBQ restaurant appears to be like any other Korean BBQ establishment in Koreatowns across the country, Kwak and his co-owner distinguish their business from other traditional Koreatown restaurants. This restaurant is the Seoul-based restaurant chain, founded by a well-known comedian and former professional Korean traditional wrestler, Kang Ho Dong (a caricature of Kang Ho Dong can be seen in the Figure 25). Unlike other traditional Koreatown
restaurants, Kwak and Ko hired Deuki Hong, a 25-year-old Korean American, as the main chef. Hong had trained under David Chang at Momofuku and Jean-Georges Vongerichten of Jean Georges. Within days of opening, the restaurant already gained enormous popularity, inducing two-hour waits for tables and commanding the attention of various U.S. mainstream media outlets. It is now the chain’s new U.S. flagship. In an interview with KoreAm in 2015, Ko said, “a lot of K-town restaurants have menus with over 75 items. Here, we focus on really good barbecue and just three really good jjiggaes (stews).” This emphasis on only a few items is common amongst new second-generation Koreatown entrepreneurs, and is increasingly popular with Korean nationals (see Chapter 5). Kwak pointed out during the interview with KoreAm that the Koreatown is evolving and transforming itself.

Manhattan’s Koreatown, it’s now not just for Korean people, it’s for mainstream America. This block has changed tremendously and evolved—but it still has yet to catch up with the evolution of food. We feel that the time has come to raise the bar and to really give people that true Korean food experience.

-Bobby Kwak, Interview with KoreAm in 2015

New creative entrepreneurs who want to dissociate themselves with the traditional Koreatown food scene – immigrant-owned and small-business centered—not only outside of Koreatown but also in Koreatown, now reconstruct Koreatown as a young and fun space for entertainment and leisure – a transclave, as Hong, the chef at Baekjeong, puts it, “most of our staff is very young, we’re not like Korean old ladies.. We want it to be fun” (Eber 2015).

This is an interesting contradiction between Koreatown entrepreneurs and non-Koreatown entrepreneurs; most Koreatown entrepreneurs I interviewed strongly believe that
their food is very authentic or even more authentic than it is in Korea; the ethnic media supported this by describing Koreatown as a neighborhood where one can access the most authentic Korean food in New York City. Yet most Korean nationals, and creative entrepreneurs would not agree with such statements.

**Conflict with the Korean Government**

The South Korea government and the Korean Food Foundation launched a new project to purchase space and establish a “New York Flagship Korean Restaurant” in Manhattan; the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Korean Food Foundation planned to invest $5 million as “seed money” and recruit private companies to invest $10 million in the hope that it would help popularize Korean food in New York City, and in turn help extend the project to other cities overseas (Lee 2010). Despite the substantial objection by the opposing parties and the public, the ruling Hannara Party (Grand National Party) rushed through a budget bill to secure the $5 million; it was rejected during the budget examination at National Assembly, but ultimately passed (Kim 2010).

However, the plan did not work as expected. The flagship restaurant project failed to recruit even a single private investor; furthermore, it faced objections from local businesspeople concerned about new competition; they insisted that the government-owned restaurant would harm smaller businesses. In a press interview, a manager of a restaurant on 32nd Street furiously predicted that, “once customers taste the high-end luxurious food in the flagship restaurant, they might complain why we wouldn’t offer the same [quality of] food. Those government officials, diplomats and resident employees at Korean companies will have meetings and gatherings at the
flagship restaurants (Choi 2010).” The concerns of lower-end or mid-level food businesses in Koreatown countered the government’s initial plan highlighting the ‘luxury’ of Korean dining; in this case, the needs of local entrepreneurs conflicted with the government’s goals.

The second representative of the EUSKCGC collaborated with the foundation, yet was similarly unenthusiastic about the flagship restaurant:

I also disagreed on that plan [on the flagship restaurant, although I have been very active in the committee]. … There was too much attention. I do not think anyone can overcome that much attention. … Obviously, we are stuck in the time when we immigrated.. and it is not easy to visit and learn a new trend in Korea. If some chefs come and teach us about a new trend, it would be great. … But buying a building is non-sense. … Rather, they should focus on PR [rather than to compete with us].

- An owner of K restaurant and representative of the EUSKCGC

The possibility of PR as beneficial for both parties required limiting the government role as a cultural transmitter and supporter of Koreatown. In this context, inviting Korean chefs -- funded by the government -- to New York would provide entrepreneurs with an opportunity to network with trendy Korean chefs without harming their own businesses. Hooni Kim was a supporter of this strategy; at a workshop at the Korea Society, he said that it would be ideal for the Korean government to support good Korean chefs in Korea to come to New York and introduce their food to locals.

Though local entrepreneurs insisted that the flagship restaurant would enhance competition between the government and local business people, the foundation argued that they did not mean to distort a market mechanism during the interview; “that’s what the market does… but what we do is to construct infrastructure for “demand generation” and media advertisement.”
For the government, state economic intervention through policy reform (Krueger and Yoo 2002) would be replaced by facilitating the process of global changes (Mann 1997; Garrett 1998) and investing in R&D and infrastructure.

Similarly, bureaucracy is also a serious problem for the food projects, because of a gap between the government and individual entrepreneurs’ expectations. Conflicts around standardization projects show how the policies would be understood differently by various actors. Standardization is indeed frequently brought up by government agencies and local media in South Korea during the Lee administration; efforts to standardize the Romanization and translation of Korean words regarding food and recipes have been highlighted. Although the government’s efforts to standardize Korean food vocabulary trace back to 1998, the Lee administration most intensively actualized policies and devised oversea projects. For instance, the “Restaurant Menu Romanization Guidebook” was initially published in 1998 by the Korean Tourism Organization (Yonhap 1998), and revised and released again for the 2002 World Cup (Yonhap 2002). The MFAFF announced an intensified project in 2009, in collaboration with

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103 South Korean government began to promote tourism and attract foreign tourists in order to revamp the economy after the 1997 crisis, and in preparation for the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Korea Tourism Organization, one of the government agencies, kicked off the project to standardize Romanization of the Korean menu, as individual restaurant owners in Korea had previously used individual transliterations. On December 21, 1998, the Korea Tourism Organization published a guidebook, called “Restaurant Menu Romanization Guidebook” and released it in South Korea and later overseas (Yonhap 1998). The Romanization effort continued through 2002, the year of the World Cup, not only by the state but also through host city governments (Yonhap 1999; 2002). The Romanization project became more international during the Roh administration, as government agencies began to discuss the needs for globalization of Korean food; the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, announced “HanStyle Promotion Master Plan” on February 15, 2007, aimed at creating added values and jobs, and boosting the nation’s image as globalized and industrialized by promoting six traditional Korean cultures: language, food, cloth, house, paper and music (HanStyle website). Plans for standard cuisine emphasizing Western measurement systems were included (MCT 2007).
MCST, MFA, the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) and Korea Foundation, particularly targeting Korean restaurants overseas; not only did they target Romanization for English, Japanese and Chinese, but they also introduced ingredients used in food and stories that each food has (the MFAFF 2009); this was published and released to overseas Korean restaurants, Korea Tourism Organization branches, and embassies and consulates in 2012 (KFF 2012).

Although both standardizing recipes and Romanization of Korean food vocabulary have been emphasized by government agencies from the beginning of the Korean food globalization projects, their reception by local actors in New York varied. Participants did not seem to resist standardizing the Romanization of Korean food vocabulary. The project was even promoted by some Korean students in New York, organized by New York University’s KGSA (Korean Graduate Students Association). They conducted a campaign to Romanize the proper nouns with English translations, rather than writing translated Korean; the Korean student who initiated this campaign shared his idea on his blog, spread words to other online groups and sent petitions to Korean companies as well as Korean restaurants to consider the change. Asiana Airline and Chungjungwon, a food company, said that they would accept the suggestions (OSEN 2010).

Yet standardization of Korean recipes was very controversial. The Korean government as well as some opinion leaders in South Korea believed that Korean food, relying on family’s “traditional” recipes, required too many steps for cooking, making them difficult to export. They intended standardized, modernized and simplified recipes with accurate measurement to be more market compatible, and would allow consumers to expect what a dish should taste like. Some entrepreneurs agreed with the government’s plan; Kyung-Rim Choi, an owner of a restaurant, bar, and bakery in Koreatown and participant in the Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee
USA, said that “customers said that they go to the restaurants with a hope that they would taste Korean food after hearing about and looking at photos, yet the food was so much different from what they saw and heard (Kim 2011).”

However, chefs treated the plan as infringing on their creativity. Hooni Kim did not hesitate to criticize the project:

Standardizing recipes is like *communism*. They are telling every cook you can cook one way, but that's what they are promoting.

-Hooni Kim at the workshop at the Korea Society, October 24th in 2012

In fact the government did not push chefs to follow standardized recipes. Rather, the project was devised with the hope that these standardized recipes would entice potential non-Korean customers with consistent taste, and allows them to cook Korean food themselves (Korea Tourism Organization).104

Yet their plans were not consistent; although they planned to promote high-end Korean food overseas (Interview with a staff at the KFF), their project on recipe modernization and standardization was based on strategies of franchise entrepreneurship promoting efficiency, calculability, predictability and control -- what George Ritzer termed the “McDonaldization” of modern society (Ritzer 1983).105 The foundation wanted to target American foodies and

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104 [http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/FO/FO_EN_7_1_0.jsp](http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/enu/FO/FO_EN_7_1_0.jsp)
105 However, in South Korean case, it should be noted that the government is the main actor to gather participants, budget and to develop the main strategies.
omnivores, through government investment in infrastructure and market involvement; yet they regularly emphasizes the role of the market and limitations of government involvement. The publicization of success stories like the high-end Korean restaurants earning Michelin stars treated individual achievements as proving the success of food promotion and Korean cuisine as a whole.

Likewise, cultural difference sometimes caused misunderstandings between the government agencies and individual entrepreneurs, particularly Korean Americans and non-Koreans. Particularly, those who do not fully understand the mechanisms of South Korean bureaucracy have more trouble with government agencies. As Hooni Kim noted, the government often cancels small projects at the last minute:

I was supposed to be cooking at James Beard Awards. The first time James Beard Awards allowing a Korean chef to cook Korean food, and I thought it was great opportunity, so I asked Korean government for little stipend that I can get Hanwoo, Korean beef from Korea and all this great ingredient. We ordered them all, but two weeks before the event, sorry we are the org not to support one chef but the entire cuisine. Things like that. Really upset. Korean government does not get it, they will get it. The government will never get.

-Hooni Kim, chef and owner of Danji and Hanjan, at a workshop at the Korea Society, October 24, 2012

Despite the conflict with the government, the project became a bridge for him to reach the Korean market; he signed a contract with Jookjangyeon by Young-II International, an

106 Their definition of Americans is not always consistent; yet in general, American consumers mean non-Koreans but non-Asians. During my interview with the staff at the KFF, I had to double check when racial and ethnic groups means when they target “non-Koreans”.

107 He did not mention the organization’s name, but the KFF and aT center, both under the MFAFF are the main organizations that deal directly with local entrepreneurs.
artisanal brand based in a small village in Korea that makes fermented sauces, to commercialize “Hooni Kim’s Special Sauce” (Lee 2013). He will also serve as a celebrity judge in April 2014 for Master Chef Korea’s third season (Yoo 2013).

The ensuing First Lady Scandal, following political scandals during the Lee administration, was a blow for the KFF as well (Yoon 2012). Budget curtailment due to the scandal and massive objection both in South Korea and among entrepreneurs in New York City turned the local business people’s attention to projects such as the plan to offer Korean lunch menus at New York public schools:

We planned to sell lunch box at public schools [in New York City]. If we get sponsored by the government, we can reduce the price. . . I think it’s a good plan [as we can make them get used to Korean food].

-An owner of K Restaurant and representative of the EUSKCGC

Introducing Korean culture through “cultural familiarization” to younger New York residents, seemed very efficient for local entrepreneurs in the long run, as potential customers would get accustomed to the taste of Korean food and eventually visit Koreatown, according to a member of the Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee USA. Yet this particular project shows the difficulties of coordinating across nations for smaller projects. The most challenging obstacle for the school food plan was the different budget cycle in South Korea. The representative explains that “we cannot assure the budget from Korean by mid-June, but schools in New York are closed that time. We should have contract with them earlier for Fall semester, but then we cannot do it because we are not sure about the budget by mid-June.” She also points out that staff changes
that often happen obstruct a project continuity. “How come we could continue working with them if they change staffs in six months. These things become hurdles for us.”

Local entrepreneurs and government also understand the public-private partnership differently. “Education” came up several times while I was talking with a staff member at the KFF at his office in Seoul and in various newspaper articles; rather than to see those entrepreneurs as partners, the foundation tended to see those old-fashioned entrepreneurs as problems, requiring education in the “oversea Korean restaurant recommendation system.” This program, which investigates overseas Korean restaurants in major cities and promotes them by publishing guidebooks if they are qualified (Wang 2013), would educate these entrepreneurs for better service (Interview at the KFF). Despite their efforts to promote Korean food through public-private collaboration, the projects seem to lack consistency due conflicts of interest among various parties, leading to inefficiency and project failure.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I turned my attention to Korean entrepreneurs as mediators of South Korea’s top-town nation branding strategies and bottom-up participation by consumers. Typologizing Korean entrepreneurs into four categories (traditional, new, ethnic and creative), based on the location of their stores, ownership of business, generation/cohort and frequency of travel to South Korea, I was able to see how differently they construct foodscape of Korean food in New York City and landscape of Koreatown through collaboration with South Korea’s government agencies; I also analyzed how different mediators respond to South Korea’s nation branding strategies and government agencies.
In the following Part II, consisting of three chapters, I will focus on three consumer groups: Korean nationals, 1.5 or second-generation Korean Americans, and non-Korean consumers. These bottom-up participants are involved in the nation branding project in general by consuming Korean culture and goods in Koreatown in Manhattan and creating the meaning of the space, although some of them do not realize it. Each chapter will analyze how the respective consumer groups understand and interpret the meaning of Koreatown, based on their collective memories.

Chapter 5 highlights Korean nationals, who are often temporary residents, either students or staff at Korean corporations, who temporarily stay at the U.S. branch but go back afterwards. As the most obviously transnational actors among the three groups, the experiences of Korean nationals, assessed by analyzing 34 in-depth interviews with temporary residents who eventually plan to return to Korea, will be addressed with a focus on how they bring their own culture directly from Korea to the U.S and claim ownership of the space.
PART II. BOTTOM-UP PARTICIPATION BY CONSUMERS (KOREAN NATIONALS, KOREAN AMERICANS AND NON-KOREANS)
Chapter 5.

Dirty and Dingy Koreatown: Korean Nationals in Koreatown

“Ultimate Koreatown World Cup Passcard:
You feel it, taste it, get pretty, have fun and sing it (in Koreatown)”
- Woosung Kang, a blogger and a graduate student at NYU

It was a very sunny afternoon on June 8, 2010, when a few Korean students got together at Washington Square Park for a special event: a few days before the 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa was held, they were distributing 1,000 free T-shirts. People happily lined up to get the red shirts, decorated with the Hangul - the Korean alphabet- and the nation’s flag; most people who got shirts knew neither why they were given away nor the language on the shirts, although the happening aroused curiosity. A few months later, on February 14, 2011, Korean students at New York University again were greeting non-Korean passersby to a celebration of their home culture, the Seollal Festival (Korean Lunar New Year) led by NYU’s KGSA (Korean Graduate Students Association); NYU’s Eisner & Lubin Auditorium was filled with 300 students, mostly non-Koreans interested in several events from the festival. Two MCs in hanbok (traditional Korean clothing) kicked off the event by introducing participants to the importance of the lunar new year not only for Chinese people, but also for Koreans, Mongolians, Tibetans and Vietnamese; they showed a short video of Koreans celebrating Seollal (Lunar New Year’s Day) and extolling the uniqueness of Korean culture; like most Korean festivals and events, traditional music and Taekwondo performances followed, as did a Korean traditional outdoor game, Jegichagi. The event finally ended with Korean food.
Their message was simple: experience something new. The first event was designed to promote *Hangul*, a unique cultural asset of Korea that is often understood by non-Asians as a rip-off of the Japanese and Chinese writing systems; the shirts had “*Dae-Han-Min-Kook* (Republic of Korea)” written in Korean, rather than with the original English logo.\(^{108}\) The second event also targeted young non-Korean students with limited knowledge of cultural differences among various East Asian nations, challenging that perception and educating them through the cultural experiences at the festival. Both events were organized and promoted by a Korean student at New York University, Kang,\(^{109}\) a well-known blogger who wrote about PR Korea and Korean culture between 2007 and 2011 on his blog, and contributed several opinion pieces on nation branding to Korean mainstream media. However, Kang was directly responsible for these events: he collaborated with government agencies and Korean enterprises in Korea, and approached Koreatown entrepreneurs, particularly for financial support. In return for their investment, these entrepreneurs gained a potential new customer demographic through the introduction of non-Koreans to contemporary Korean culture -- best sampled, of course, in Koreatown.

In this chapter, I argue that these two events are not only top-down, initiated by government agencies, and mediated by Korean entrepreneurs in New York, but also work bottom-up, as Korean nationals make a commitment to create positive images of the nation. Like Kang, they introduce contemporary Korean culture, e.g. Korean pop culture, food and entertainment, and bringing them into New York’s consumption scene. Some Korean nationals

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\(^{108}\) The official jersey of South Korea team, the shirts’ logo, “Be the Reds,” symbolizes the nation’s passion and national pride and identity; the slogan was chanted during the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup and the 2008 World Cup in Germany.

\(^{109}\) The vignette above is based on posts about branding Korea strategies that appeared on his blog at [www.koreabrandimage.com](http://www.koreabrandimage.com) as well as an interview with him on April 25, 2012.
actively participate in the projects by helping organize promotional events; most are indirect or passive actors, as consumers and transmitters of contemporary Korean culture and Koreatown patrons who often reproduce the Koreanness of the space.

For most Korean nationals, Koreatown is useful place for being proud of or attached to. However, their presence, interaction in and usage of Koreatown reflect a form of public diplomacy that has been emphasized by the Korean government for the past couple of decades, particularly when they communicate with non-Koreans and confirm the popularity of Korean culture among non-Korean customers. With the belief that “a single individual is a public ambassadors” and “each Korean represents its nation” when they are abroad, they participate in the larger nation branding project -- whether or not they clearly understand its meaning, intend to practice it, or even potentially reject it.

This chapter analyzes 34 interviews with Korean nationals in their 20s and 30s, so called South Korea’s consumer generations, conducted both in Seoul and in New York City. These generations benefited from economic prosperity between the late 1980s and 1997, and from the Foreign Travel Liberalization Act in Korea in 1989 and the gradual liberalization of studying abroad since the 1980s. They attended college in the 1990s and 2000s, when college culture was transitioning from students movement-centered to consumption-based. However, these generations have also undergone the uncertainties of economic hardship after the crisis of 1997, either as young adults or students, or through their parents. These generations bring contemporary culture directly from Seoul or other big cities in South Korea to New York City. If immigrants and their children see Koreatown as an “ethnic space”, where they develop and practice their ethnic identity through consumption in a context of American society, Korean
nationals see this space as “national space”, reflecting nation’s contemporary consumer culture. In this sense, Koreans understand their culture in terms of nation, rather than ethnicity; it involves recognizing Korean culture in the context of the nation’s contemporary culture, directly delivered from South Korea, and distinguishes itself from “old-fashioned immigrants’ culture”.

Most of the Korean nationals were college and graduate students or language students in New York City; some were working at the time of the interviews. Twenty-nine out of 34 lived in New York City, while three lived elsewhere in the U.S. but had traveled to New York City several times; two had returned to Korea permanently at the time of the interviews after finishing their U.S. educations. Four came to the U.S. with transnational or global backgrounds due to attending American schools in other Asian countries, such as China and Indonesia, or schools in Britain. Most came to the U.S. for educational purposes; only one interviewee immigrated to the U.S. with their family. Although some participants were comfortable with both languages, 32 interviews were conducted in Korean, and two in English.

**South Korea’s Consumer Generation**

**From a Thrifty Society to a Consumer Society**

Responding to domestic demand and international pressure for political liberalization, South Korea rapidly began to extend its economic scale in the late 1980s. The strong state remained, as they actively engaged in economic intervention, while the state’s investment in heavy and chemical industries since the 1970s continued (Haggard and Moon 1990; 1993). A mass production society had finally been established (Chung 1994), but by the late 1980s, South Korea had been slowly moving toward a consumer society. Pro-democratization movements,
spurred by the death of the student Chong-Chul Park and “the Great Labor Struggle” in 1987;\textsuperscript{110} the sharp increase in wages for the urban population (see Figure 26 below) in tandem with increasing mass purchasing power; and the gradual liberalization of the consumption and distribution industries all contributed to the working population’s incorporation into a consumer society, limited to the small upper class (Nam 2008).

Figure 26. Average monthly income & expenditures

* Data gathered among urban working households (two or more household members)
** Korean Statistical Information Service

\textsuperscript{110}In the 1960’s and 70’s, the low wages among manufacturing workers at small and medium size workplaces was advantageous to South Korea’s rapid economic growth, not only compared to the developed nations but also other Asian competitors. According to Bello and Rosefeld, by the 1987, South Korea’s average manufacturing wage was only 11\% of that in the U.S., 75\% of Taiwan’s, and 80\% of Hong Kong’s. Their working conditions were hazardous; workers at light industries, particularly female workers, worked the longest hours and had the highest accident rates in the world (Bello and Rosenfeld 1990, p24; Minns 2001). Unions and strikes were legally restricted.
As seen in Figure 26, consumption expenditure have steadily increased since the 1970s, with a rapid increase in tandem with the wage growth in the ‘80s. Some Korean scholars, therefore, argue that consumer society--the society of media and spectacle, of multinational capitalism--finally arrived in South Korea in the late 1980s (Paik 1994; Kang 2006; Nam 2008). This also was the time that the U.S.-branded goods and franchises began to slowly penetrate Korean consumers’ daily lives. Lifestyle and consumerism became critical in terms of identification among urban South Koreans in their 20s and 30s during the 1990s (Kim 2008; Won 2008). The emergence of ‘New Generations’, enjoying consumption for self-identification rather than just basic needs (Joo 1994), transformed the socio-cultural landscape of Korean society, reinforced by the influences of global change and cosmopolitanism. However, the service industry in South Korea was still relatively small compared to other OECD nations.

The “post-386 generation,” a cohort in their 30s (now in their 40s), born in the 60s and college-age by the 80s, was the first described by the media as a “consumer generation” that valued individualism, lifestyle choices, and a taste for foreign products and branded goods (Lee 1994; Park 1995; Chun and Choi 1996; Kim and Hur 2007; Kim 2008). In the 1990s, the term ‘386’ swept the media; the ‘386 generation’ (currently the 486 generation) are considered one of the most politically dedicated generations, having participated in student movements as well as labor movements in the 1980s, often witnessing or being subject to violent police retaliation. Many of their leaders later entered formal politics, such as during the liberal administrations of Dae-jung Kim and Moo-Hyun Roh.
However, although the 386 generation is often described as the first consumer generation, I pay particular attention to the later generations in their 20s and 30s, because as children and teens they directly benefited from political and economic development in the 80s, and subsequently experienced the financial crisis of 1997 as teenagers or young adults. I discuss these Korean consumers in their 20s and 30s together, because the earlier cohort, while benefiting from the economic growth and political freedom in the late 1980s, were critically affected at the beginning of their adult lives by the financial crisis of 1997. The younger generation was not directly threatened by the crisis, but their households likely were. Moreover, that have in common suffering due to economic polarization as young adults; the “88 man Won Generation” or “880000 Won Generation” (Woo and Park 2007), referring to the generation who was in the 20s in the 2000s, have struggled with tuition hikes, increased job competition, and economic inequality.\footnote{The term “88 man Won Generation” or “880,000 Won Generation”, after the title of a book by the leftist economist Seok-hoon Woo and leftist journalist Kwon-Il Park, entered South Korean discourse in 2007. The term referred to those in their 20s, 95% of whom will only make 880,000 Won a month (approximately $800) due to rapid growth in contingent jobs. This number was calculated based on the assumption that 95% of those in their 20s will be contingent workers; this income was estimated as 1,190,000 ($1100)×0.74 (the average income of those in their 20s), meaning that Koreans in their 20s make 26% less than those working adults on average (Woo and Park 2007). Similar to the “700 Euros Generation” in Greece, this term indicates how a growing number of young Koreans are trapped in economic uncertainty and economic polarization, unlike the post-Korean War generation or 386 generation, both of whom who benefited from structural economic growth in the 1970s and ‘80s.} These younger generations in their 20s and 30s also are those who quickly responded to global economic and political changes before and after the financial crisis of 1997. Despite the 1997 crisis, the number of Korean international travelers and students enrolled in the U.S. institutions has rapidly increased.
As seen in Figure 27 above, the number of Koreans who departed from South Korea dramatically increased in the late 1980s due to the complete liberalization of overseas travel in 1989 and the gradual liberalization of study abroad during the 1980s; the generation in their early 20s now also enjoyed foreign culture by traveling or backpacking outside of South Korea before the crisis. While the financial crisis of 1997 impacted foreign travel, it quickly rebounded, and soared before the global financial crisis of 2008.

*The data on ‘Korean Departure’ was gathered by Korea Tourism Organization.
**1975-1997 data do not include crew members.
The U.S. is one of the most popular destinations for tourism and study abroad. As shown in Figure 28 above, the number of Korean nationals who obtained student visas from the U.S. has steadily increased since the early 2000s, and has rebounded since the global financial crisis of 2008. According to Data from Open Doors by Institute of International Education, South

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112 This data shows the number of Korean nationals who obtained F1 or M1 visas. Due to the visa waiver program that began in 2009, all non-immigrant Koreans except tourists should obtain temporary visas. Most temporary Korean residents are students who obtained either F1 visas through enrollment at non-vocational academic institutions (including language training programs) or M1 visas through enrollment at vocational or other recognized institutions (http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/student.html). Although it indicates the number of students who begin school that year or renew their visas, it does not show the total number of Korean students who temporarily stay in the U.S.; many students, particularly college or graduate students, receive F1 visas for their school years but mostly less than 5 years (U.S. Department of State • Bureau of Consular Affairs).
Korea has been the third most common place of origin for total international enrollment in U.S. educational institutions since 2005, only behind China and India. 113 114 English fever in South Korea and the hope of achieving global cultural capital through U.S. education (e.g. higher degrees from American institutions, professional knowledge from degrees and English skills) (Kim 2008)115 attract these adult students to the U.S. The fever has even expanded to elementary, junior and junior high school students due to South Korea’s extreme competition for jobs, huge expenditures on private education, and distrust of the public education system (Lee 2005; Im et al, 2008).

Korean Nationals in New York City

Since the mid-1990s, when more Koreans began to travel European countries and North America, New York has been a major destination, especially for younger Koreans. As seen in

113 China finally surpassed India on total number of international students enrolled in U.S. institutions by country of origin in 2009 (Institute of International Education)
114 This number is very provocative if total population numbers are considered. I calculated a ratio per million people; although South Korea is ranked third place in the 2012/13 academic year, South Korea’s ratio per capita is much higher than China or India.

Table 4. Number of international students enrolled in U.S. academic institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
<th>Number of Students enrolled</th>
<th>total population (million)</th>
<th>Ratio (every million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>235597</td>
<td>1357</td>
<td>173.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>96754</td>
<td>1277</td>
<td>75.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>70627</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>1406.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

115 Kim (2008) argues that global cultural capital should be understood in the context of a global hierarchy of education and universities. With 50 Korean graduate students at Z University, he notes that most of his interviewees clearly acknowledge the hierarchy of higher education and the advantage in job opportunity that comes with a U.S. degree.
Figure 29, South Korean visitors to New York City have rapidly increased in number, except for the crisis and post-crisis years 2008, 2009 and 2010. In 2013, 293,000 Korean visitors arrived in New York City, the highest number ever. According to NYC & Company, one out of four South Korean visitors to the U.S. goes to New York City (NYC & Company 2014).116

![Figure 29. South Korean visitors to New York City](image)


116 I did not include tourists in my sample, due to the limited duration of their stay in New York City. Yet this figure shows how popular New York City is as a tourist destination among South Koreans.
Most young temporary Korean students and workers in New York City have urban backgrounds, whether born in Seoul or its suburbs, or arriving there as students,117 and identify themselves either as middle class or upper middle class.118 Their lives in Seoul featured everyday cosmopolitanism (Beck 2005); but rather than understanding cosmopolitanism as new economic activities, politics, work and identity (Vertovec and Cohen 2002; Beck 2004), their cosmopolitanism is largely based on cultural consumption and media exposure (Beck 2004). However, as Calhoun points out, this cosmopolitanism, with its appreciation of global diversity and cultural opportunities, is rooted in a certain degree of wealth and privilege (Calhoun 2002: p108; Skrbis, Kendall, and Woodward 2004); indeed, only three of the Korean nationals I interviewed identified as working class, with one identifying as between working and middle class.119 Unlike traditional immigrants, who leave their homeland because of socio-economic and political hardship in their home country, these Korean nationals choose to come to New York for further educational opportunities and cultural activities.

Most Korean nationals – temporary residents – share images of New York as a city of consumption, fashion, sophistication and culture with which to engage before settling down into

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117 Unlike the United States, most high quality universities are concentrated in Seoul --the “in-Seoul universities”-- excepting a few national universities.

118 Many students in my sample distinguish their socio-economic status from their parents’ generation, who achieved upward mobility due to structural mobility (e.g. job expansion due to the economic boom) in the 1970s and ‘80s. However, despite the fact that they largely identify themselves as middle class or upper middle class--only two out of 34 interviewees identify themselves as working class--many do not feel secure about their economic prospects.

119 Class identification in this chapter is subjective; instead of only asking about their objective assessment on socioeconomic status (e.g. household income, education and occupation), I asked for their subjective class identification, whether they think their family is working class, middle class or upper middle class, as well as some objective factors such as education and their occupations (Hong 2005; Cho 2006).
suburban stability; these concepts are mostly constructed through media, as so many Hollywood movies and TV dramas, such as *Sex and the City* or *Gossip Girl*, portray the city in this manner. Jieun, a graduate student at NYU, states, “Oh, my god. Gossip Girl! By watching these dramas [Sex and the City and Gossip Girl] [when I was in Korea as a young adult], I had an image of New York City as very trendy and exotic.” The most common reason for these college and graduate students to attend New York City schools is the value of the name or of the school; yet the cultural opportunities that New York City provides is also a major draw. For Youngji, who was born and grew up in Seoul, moved to Shanghai with her parents, and then went to American junior high and high schools, it was natural to go to college in the U.S. However, New York City was special: “As a young kid, who was a huge fan of ballet, I immediately fell in love with New York City, [while traveling with my parents]. … In retrospect, it was the time when I decided to move in New York.” This is particularly true for those who identify themselves as middle or upper middle class.

However, for people whose parents are unable to pay all their living expenses, New York City holds attraction due to the opportunity for jobs at Korean stores. Youngju came to New York City in 2000, after two years at college in a South Korean city; she planned to stay in New York for a couple of years before returning to school. The main reason for her move, as for so many traditional immigrants, was job opportunities:

> Although my older sister agreed on paying my tuition, I had to make money to support myself. I was a [language] student. Where else would I choose? I did not really want to come to New York, [because I wanted to improve English in a short period and return to Korea], but my friend who came earlier persuade me to come, by telling me “don’t you have to make money? New York is the best option for that.”
>
> -Youngju, 32, engineer
She worked at a Korean-owned nail salon for one and a half years, then at a Korean-own
deli for a few years. She continued working at the deli even after transferring to City University
of New York. Yet she thought that her situation was better than other CUNY students, who, while
hoping that the U.S. education would be beneficial to their future careers, had to work many
hours to pay tuition as well as living expenses.

However, although these students see their socio-economic status (largely based on their
family backgrounds) as working class or between working class and middle class, their socio-
cultural tastes and education are not representative of the working class population. Chae, a 31-
year-old Ph.D. student who has attended prestigious schools, says that “the socio-economic
status of my parents are working class, but I do have social capital, but not economic capital
yet.” Despite his parents’ socio-economic status, he was able to attend graduate school due to
fellowships from both his school and Korean foundations.

Koreatown: Perceptions, Recognitions and Functions

Koreatown on 32nd Street projects “the landscape of the nation” for the range of Korean
nationals. In the U.S. context, Koreatown is an ethnic enclave offering shopping and consuming
opportunities not only for ethnic Koreans but also for non-Koreans; yet the space itself produces
an ethnic identity by resonating with the memories and history of Korean immigrants and their
struggles. Yet for most Korean nationals, Koreatown is a space of national identity.

Koreatown as a Reflection of “their Nation”
Korean nationals recognize that Manhattan’s Koreatown is the only space in the city representing South Korea; many think that it should therefore showcase contemporary Korea as trendy and technologically advanced. Yet the landscape of Koreatown mirrors the Seoul of the 1970s or ‘80s, with a mass of shabby buildings and hectic streets. When asked, Korean nationals consistently used negative adjectives to describe the space: “wack”, played out, outdated, old-fashioned, with the atmosphere of the ‘70s or ‘80s in Seoul, dirty, gloomy, and nasty.

Like many Korean nationals I interviewed, Eunji, a 34-year-old artist, had a poor first impression of Koreatown: “I guess I was expecting too much. At a first sight, I was like ‘oh my god, this street is so dirty and gloomy. And then I was like that’s it?’” Sunee, a 38-year-old college instructor who attended graduate school in New York between 2002 and 2011 and then returned to Korea, echoes Eunji’s reaction, vividly remembering her first visit to Koreatown:

I was like wow it looks like so ‘70s. Do you know Cosmos Department store on 32nd Street [which closed and reopened on 36th Street in 2013]? There was the Cosmos Department store in Myeongdong back in the 1970s. …. I still remember how it looked when I was an elementary school kid. Yet you see the store that has the same name. I had a certain image of Cosmos department store from my childhood memory.
-Sunee, 38, college instructor in Seoul

Sunee’s first memory of 32nd Street was explicitly linked to her memories of Seoul in earlier decades. Before the development of the upper middle class and trendy Gangnam district in the 1970s, Myeongdong was the busiest shopping district in Seoul, identified with modern Korea, youth culture and cosmopolitan consumer culture, especially in the 1960s and ‘70s (Chun
Cosmos department store was an important symbol there of economic development and growing consumerism in Seoul; it closed in 1992 due to loss of business.

This outdated image of Seoul in Koreatown is evident in a series of unplanned signboards on 32nd Street featuring old landscapes of big cities in South Korea. As discussed in chapter 3, during the Lee administration the Seoul Metropolitan government initiated new urban design projects, demolishing and standardizing disorganized store signboards. As an artist, Eunji approaches this presentation of 32nd Street from the perspective of urban design:

It was in New York, but it (Koreatown) was not New York. … I saw all the Korean signboards… But they were all outdated [before the urban design projects in Seoul]. Look at the fonts and designs of signboards [written in Korea].

-Eunji, 34, artist

Eunji details how the physical landscape of Koreatown showcases the past of the nation — underdeveloped and unmodern. Hyun, a 30-year-old language student, agrees: “You have a certain image of commercial buildings in Korea [particularly in newly redeveloped or refurbished neighborhoods]. Clean and well-organized. Orderly signboards!” Even the Korean National Assembly echoes this sentiment as seen at Chapter 3: in the session on Diplomacy.

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120 This area was mainly a residential area for Koreans during the Choson Dynasty. In the 1880s, this neighborhood turned into a Chinese enclave for their merchants and the Manchu army. However, after the Japan’s victory of Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), most of Chinese merchants left and the Japanese took over Myeongdong and adjacent areas. In the 1930s, the area turned into a commercial district as key institutions during the colonial period (e.g. the Oriental Development Company and the Industrial Bank) were established there. During that era, the building of key department stores in the neighborhood made it a symbol of the Japanese Empire and colonial exploitation as well as modern cosmopolitan consumerism. The Korean War demolished the area; post-war restoration reestablished large buildings, including department stores, hotels, UNESCO, and offices. The area became a center of youth culture, fashion and modern consumerism in the 1960s and ‘70s (Chun 2013).
Trade and Unification in North America during the 2009 Inspection of the Administration, the unplanned and chaotic landscape of Koreatown was criticized for conflicting with and distorting the present image of South Korea as a well-planned, clean, rapidly changing, and cosmopolitan nation.

The time lag between the contemporary culture of originating nations and their avatars in other nations in the form of urban landscape reflects the history of transnational migration. Koreatown was created by the Korean immigrants who came to 32nd Street in the 1970s and the 80s when both that street and the streets of Seoul were not very attractive. These immigrants think of Korea as it was when they left, and are unable to reflect the rapid recent cultural changes in the aesthetics -- and thus cannot reflect what contemporary Korean culture is. Hyun, who interned at a Korean-owned company in New Jersey, notes how the images that these old timers have maintained hold back the space: “People’s thoughts are so old too. Whenever I see these immigrants, who have lived here for 20-30 years, I wonder if they seriously live in 2000s.” As Jin, a 28-year-old graduate student, points out, “It is just a picture of New York that is very lightly colored with Korea, yet I would not say that it represents Korea.”

**Functions of Koreatown**

When Korean nationals visit Koreatown, therefore, their purpose is very functional: eating, drinking, and shopping, or benefiting from services for non-U.S. citizens. For instance, Yoon, a 22-year-old language student, went directly to Koreatown after arriving in New York in 2011; after dropping off his baggage, his roommate took him to 32nd Street to open a bank account and set up a cell phone account. “[I went to 32nd Street], first of all, because of the
language barrier [I had].” When Nahee, a 26-year-old graduate student, had a problem with her computer, she immediately went to a Korean store to get it fixed, because she was able to more comfortably explain complicated computer issues to Koreans, although she speaks English well in general; she also felt more able to trust other Koreans with fixing the technology. Sunee also went directly to 32nd Street from Flushing to open her cell phone account in 2002:

Back then, international students were not able to open their cell phone accounts unless you knew someone who can sponsor you. No cell phone without credits. You had to have a Social Security Number too. … The only way to open an account was to borrow someone else’s name.
-Sunee, 38, college instructor in Seoul

Cell phone dealers in Koreatown thus penetrate a niche market. To target international students, they provide not only regular services but also extra accommodations for those with problems specific to their recent arrival. For instance, if a customer does not have a billing address -- which is typically the case, as they reside in temporary accommodations on first arriving in the U.S. -- dealers may provide them with temporarily ‘official’ addresses to ensure their access to phone service.

Although many visitors initially come to Koreatown for functional reasons, the ongoing consumption in Koreatown resonates with nostalgia for the experience of consumption and entertainment in Seoul, even though the past is fairly close to the present. Junga, 26-year-old graduate student in New York, often went to Koreatown with Korean friends from her program, where they had drinks at a Korean bar and hung out at a noraebang (karaoke bar) \(^{121}\) as she has

\(^{121}\) Noraebang, originating in Japan, refers to a karaoke bar in a private room. The first noraebang opened in Busan, the second largest city in South Korea; it rapidly became popular in the 1990s
done with friends in Korea. This sort of activity is more prominent among Korean students who live in other regions of the U.S. and visit Manhattan’s Koreatown. Kyujin, 32-year-old graduate student who lives in Boston, recalls his first visit to Koreatown as an amusing experience:

It was at the end of 2006 [his first year in the U.S.]. The first place I went with other [Korean] graduate students [who came from Boston] was Gam Mee Ok [on 32nd Street]. .. Well, because that was famous. We planned to eat in Koreatown, so we did, then we went out for sightseeing. On Christmas, we went Kunjip for dinner. … Then we went [to a] Noraebang. We were like a group with four guys. The staff there was like, “do you need an ashtray?” Then I was like, wow can we smoke indoors? Then we had fun in [the] Korean style.

-Kyujin, 32-year-old graduate student in Boston

For Kyujin, “Korean style” refers to his typical memories of college life in Seoul: going on a binge until late at night, and singing, drinking and smoking at a noraebang. Kyujin missed the time and manner in which he spent time with his friends in Seoul--indeed, how he continues to spend time with them when he goes back to Korea most summers.

Ayoung, a 29-year-old graduate student, echoes Kyujin’s memories of Korean-style consumption, but her views of it are not always positive. She remembers that her visit to Pocha 32, one of the Korean bars on 32nd Street, reflected Korean-style drinking culture: drinking to excess, people pressing drinks on others, and drinking games. Visiting New York to see a friend whose boss knew an owner of the bar, Ayoung joined them for drinks. With the advertisement (Kim 2014), and has remained one of the most popular leisure and entertainment activities for teenagers who were at school from early morning to late at night.

122 He began college in 1998, when indoor smoking was common, especially at bars, noraebang, cafes, and internet cafes in Seoul. At the time, once you entered these entertainment places, one of the first questions that the staff asked would be if customers needed an ashtray. A law against smoking in public spaces was enacted in July 2013.
posters for Korean liquors, e.g. soju, the familiar entertainers in the background, tables found in Korea but not in the U.S., and wall decorations, she felt that she was at a bar resembling the cheap and shabby pubs found near campuses in Seoul – albeit with higher prices. In Koreatown, Korean nationals are surprised by reminders of college life, as many do not expect to drink typical Korean anju (food consumed with alcohol) until the wee hours in the heart of a foreign city.

For Kyujin and Ayoung, Manhattan’s Koreatown provides more leisure options than Boston, despite higher prices and the outdated physical appearance. Kyujin explains: “we actually live in Cambridge [not in Boston], and only have a couple of Korean restaurants. They are all just so-so. And we heard that New York has various options with better quality [compared to Cambridge].” In this sense, Koreatown provides more opportunities to reenact their previous experiences, whether Korean nationals’ practice in Koreatown is real or imagined. This is particularly true for those Korean students who live in small towns and thus have no local Koreatown. Inha, a 28-year-old graduate student in Illinois, has visited New York twice; her trips to New York were planned based on “traditions” among Korean students on campus:

Because we have many Korean students in my school, there are some Korean restaurants catering Korean food…. But food there is not so much great. .. We went to Koreatown in Manhattan for lunch, because I heard that the Seolleongtang [ox bone soup] at Gam Mee Ok was so tasty. There is a kind of “to-eat-list” for Yuhaksaeng [Korean students] once one visits New York…. There are certain Korean restaurants that are pretty famous among Yuhaksaeng. We [she and her friends] all had a plan to visit each of them [while in New York City], because we should get our money’s worth.

-Inha, a 28-year-old graduate student in Illinois

Yuhaksaeng refer to Korean students who attend regular schools outside Korea. Generally, language students are not included in this category.
Inha shows how Koreatown is anticipated exaggeratedly and reproduced by Korean students who rarely have a chance to consume and entertain themselves in Korean style. She developed an imaginary experience of dining at an ‘authentic’ Korean restaurant before visiting New York City. The ‘to-eat-list’ became a tradition in regards to Korean dining in New York, despite the many non-Korean restaurants that would also be new to them. When Inha was in New York a second time, she went to one of Koreatown’s bakeries to buy Korean-style buns, bread and pastries to share with friends back on her campus, as souvenirs from New York -- or, more specifically, as souvenirs of New York’s memories of Seoul. Ayoung also had a similar experience with her friends from Nebraska and Utah, who “swept the buns out” at Kyoryeo-dang before leaving New York and ate a lot of Korean food in both Manhattan and New Jersey Koreatowns: “They are desperately craving Korean food, [and] even go to New Jersey to eat Hoe [Korean style raw fish].”

**Koreatown as a Space for Nation Branding**

These Korean nationals’ evaluations of Koreatown and Korean restaurants in Koreatown is entirely rooted in their experience as consumers in Korea itself. Koreatown does reflect not who “we” are and what “we” eat in Korea; “Others” – the immigrants and their children — modify Korean culture to adapt to a new environment. In this sense, Korean culture that should be directly transmitted from Korea is distorted in the process. However, Korean nationals clearly recognize that Koreatown in Manhattan is the only space representing “their nation” and its culture in New York City. By looking to Koreatown as the presence of Korea in Manhattan, Korean nationals broadly construct and reconstruct Koreatown through the lens of their own
national experience, and more specifically consider it a platform of nation branding through cultural consumption and entertainment and a soon-to-be total cultural space -- whether or not they recognize that they are participating in the process.

Figure 30. Nation Branding from below

These are collective nation branding efforts from bottom-up, but to different degrees. Some are more actively participating in the larger “Branding Korea” project, clearly recognizing that their consumption practices contribute to the promotion of their nation and the popularity of its culture. However, most Korean nationals are unaware of this broader project, and of their participation in it. Some have never heard of ‘nation branding’, public diplomacy and PR Korea, or if they have, do not understand fully what they entail. For instance, while Korean nationals often perorate about how unknown and degraded South Korea is among non-Koreans based on their personal experience as foreigners, they also express pride in the growing popularity of
Korean pop culture and food in New York City. They sometimes introduce their culture to non-Korean friends, and bring them to Koreatown to explore the culture. A few, however, simply reject the idea of nation branding or any form of nationalism involved in their Koreatown consumption.

**Nation Branding Projects by Korean Nationals in New York**

The two events held by New York University’s KGSA discussed at the beginning of this chapter were voluntarily organized events, efforts that Korean nationals have made in promoting Korean culture, e.g. language, food, traditional and contemporary pop culture, and history. Event organizing is based on a belief that Korean students, mostly Korean nationals and a few Korean Americans, would contribute to Korean culture promotion through their active participation in the Korean cultural opportunities in New York City. Cultural events organized by New York University’s KGSA (Korean Graduate Students’ Association), as well as a Korean food event organized by Columbia’s KGSA (Korean Graduate Students’ Association) and KANA (Korean Association of New York Art Schools) are good examples of this sporadic but effective cultural ambassadorship.

Kang, a graduate student at New York University and a Vice President of NYU’s KGSA, organized several events and campaigns aimed at publicizing Korean culture to non-Koreans; the events emphasized Korea’s cultural potential in New York City, and more broadly in the U.S. and internationally. Kang’s memories of being a teenage immigrant motivated him to pursue PR and marketing, with an emphasis on Korean culture in the U.S.:
After I began junior high school in Denver, I learned that there was a huge gap in the image of Korea, between what the Korean media described and what people really know. The first question people would ask me was, “Are you Japanese? Are you Chinese?” … If they knew about Korea, then they would talk about Kim Jung-II, North Korea or nuclear weapon. … Especially in History class, students learned about China and Japan, but Korea was completely missing. If anything was there, there was a lot of wrong information. It seemed like people described Korea as [it was] right after Korean War.

- Kang, a graduate student at NYU

Korean nationals travelling or studying overseas often confront similar questions that they never would have in Korea: the first question regarding ethnicity based on ignorance of East Asian diversity, and the second conflating South Korea with the notorious international image of North Korea. These misperceptions often trigger Korean nationals to rethink and reconsider their nation and its status worldwide.

In planning the KGAS events, Kang called for the engagement of other Korean students at NYU, mostly Korean nationals, and recruited students at other colleges in New York to volunteer for the projects and events he organized; he also worked with members two online groups interested in promoting Korean culture as a form of public diplomacy -- a tactic emphasized by the Korean government past two decades. The World Cup and Seolla events were completely organized and promoted by Kang and Korean graduate students at NYU. For the World Cup event, Kang designed the t-shirts, and contacted Korean corporations, Korean business associations in New York, and individual entrepreneurs for financial sponsorship. He shared his ideas with Korean online groups and Korean student organizations to gain attention for the events and encourage non-NYU participation. Two days before the Seolla event, some Korean students wore Hanbok, traditional clothing, as a promotional device; board members also made 300 Bok Jumoni, small traditional pouches, to give out at the event.
Columbia’s KSGA (Korean Graduate Students Association) has also organized two events as part of the Korea Forum held there since 1983: “The Korean Table” on November 18, 2011, and “HAN COOK” on April 14, 2014. ‘The Korean Table’, held on Columbia’s campus, began with cooking demonstrations and food samples courtesy of Bibimbap Backpackers, Korilla Truck, and Binggrae’s Melona truck; a forum with guest speakers such as Marja Vongerichten, Angelo Sosa, and Eddie Song, the owner of Korilla Truck, followed.

HAN COOK [Han means Korean ethnic] was co-organized by Columbia University’s KGSA and KANA (Korean Association of New York Art Schools) (Koreatimes 2014). Tickets were sold online at $10 for five dishes and a drink offered by the Korean liquor and beer companies Hite and Jinro. They tried to entice a larger non-Korean audience by playing traditional Korean music and wearing Hanbok, and a person could get a free ticket if they brought three non-Korean friends (Newsis 2014). These two organizations aimed to promote the Korean nation and its culture through a lens of culinary culture, and “introducing Korean restaurants across the city to New Yorkers, not limited within Koreatown” (Interview with a co-president of KANA in 2014); yet these events were largely sponsored by Korean corporations

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124 For more stories, visit their blog at http://backpackers-group.com
125 Korilla BBQ is a popular food truck in New York City founded by Edward Song, a young Korean American. He began his business after graduating from Columbia University. Melona is steady selling ice bar, produced by Binggrae, a well-known food producer and distributor in Korea. Binggrae also sent a truck to promote their products.
126 This information is listed their http://www.eventbrite.com/e/han-cook-tickets-11134602897?aff=eorg
and Koreatown entrepreneurs hoping that publicizing Korean food would lead to future revenue.\textsuperscript{127}

These events organized by Korean nationals residing or even traveling in New York reflect the \textit{collectivity} of the efforts to rebuild Korea’s image as culturally fun and intriguing, as well as a technologically advanced nation. Having experienced cultural exchanges – whether directly through travel and study abroad or indirectly through the media -- and with the belief that “a single individual is a public ambassadors” and “each Korean represents its nation” when abroad, these Korean nationals willingly participated in a larger nation branding project. The rhetoric of the Korean national as ambassadors abroad has been emphasized by the Korean government and media; during the TV conversation with the President-elect on January 18, 1998, Dae-jung Kim underscored the importance of foreign investment and public diplomacy:

\begin{quote}
The world has already been transformed from an era of nation-states to an era of global economy.\textsuperscript{128} We should achieve a conceptual shift to positively accept more foreign capitals. All the Korean citizens also should be [public] ambassadors
- President Dae-jung Kim in a TV address to Korean citizens (Yeonhap January 18, 1998)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{127} Their sponsors for this event were listed on their promotion video as Hite (beer company in Korea), Jinro (liquor company—famous for soju brand), San Soo Kap San 2, Soju Haus (a Korean style bar on Fifth Avenue between 31\textsuperscript{st} and 32\textsuperscript{nd} Streets), Kristabelli (a Korean restaurant on 36\textsuperscript{th} Street, invested by JYP, an entertainment company in Korea), Dotory (Korean Eatery in Brooklyn), KCAA (Korean Chefs Association of America), Apple PMR(Pain Management & Rehabilitation on 32\textsuperscript{nd} Street), and KCSNY (Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York) (http://vimeo.com/93453224).

\textsuperscript{128} Although free trade and influx of foreign capital were strongly emphasized during Kim Administration, they did not ignore government investment on new industries such as cultural industry, IT and BT, as I discussed in Chapter 2.
This rhetoric, emphasizing both economic globalization and the nation-state, has continued through following administrations, as shown Chapters 2 and 3. Yoon, a 22-year-old language student, responds to this rhetoric as highlighting national identity:

Also, when you are overseas, not necessarily while in Korea, you become, I would say, *patriotic*. Some kind of feeling [of] you love your country. I don’t know why but I thought I should shop at Korean-owned stores.

-Yoon, 22-year-old language student

Korean food promotion by Korean nationals in New York reflects this on-going rhetoric, to different degrees. The events organized by NYU and Columbia’s Korean student associations and KANA clearly share the common goal of promoting Korean food. The voluntary ‘ambassadors’ are mostly Korean students, temporary residents, or young professionals in New York City. Others do not live in this city, yet visit for the specific purpose of national cultural promotion. Bibimbap Backpackers, for instance, collaborated with Columbia’s KGSA for “The Korean Table’ event during their eight-month promotional tour.

Bibimbap Backpackers, five Korean nationals in their 20s and 30s travelling for “Korean food marketing,” began their project with their own savings; however, they soon received financial sponsorship from Korean corporations, e.g. CJ FoodVille, SK Telecom, and Millet

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129 CJ FoodVille has a franchise Bibimbap restaurant, Bibigo [Bibimbap+to-go], which opened its first U.S outlet in Los Angeles in 2010. At a press conference on May 10, 2010, Il-Chun Kim, a CJ FoodVille representative, announced that “CJ has prepared for a new way of globalization of Korean food by recreating and reinterpreting Korean culinary culture by incorporate Korean food into local culinary culture.” (Kim 2010)
(Wang 2011), and collaborated with Kyung-duk Seo.\textsuperscript{130} a professor and PR expert in Korean cultural promotion. The Korean Food Foundation appointed them as honorary ambassadors for Korean food promotion. With their own savings and financial sponsorships from corporations as well as the MFAFF and the KFF, they were able to travel to 23 cities in 15 countries over eight months, organizing 99 food tasting events (Kang 2012).\textsuperscript{131} The Korean Table event at Columbia University was one of their series of 100 events, “The 90th Bibimbap Table”.

When nation branding arrives in New York, Koreatown, as an imagined property, becomes an efficient asset for bottom-up participants promoting Korean culture within the territory of Korea’s cultural influence. Some actively collaborate not only with Korean government agencies and Korean corporations, but also work closely with Koreatown’s entrepreneurs for nation branding promotion; particularly, if the event is food-related, Koreatown entrepreneurs enthusiastically offer support and sponsorship. The Seolla event was sponsored by two business organizations. The event and raffle were sponsored financially by Kwangjuyo, a Korean traditional ceramic corporation; after several programs encouraging non-Koreans to participate onstage, they raffled Hwayo, premium soju, made by the corporation. Korean

\textsuperscript{130} He worked on the important advertising projects discussed in Chapter 3: with the TV program Infinite Challenge to create the Bibimbap advertisement in the New York Times in 2009, and the series of Bibimbap CF first aired in Times Square in 2010.

\textsuperscript{131} Their first event was held in Beijing on April 9, 2011 and lasted for eight months. By 2011 Bibimbap Backpackers had completed the food promotion project and achieved media attention; they then decided to continue the project by recruiting new members. The 2012 team limited their travel to the U.S.; the U.K. 2014 Bibimbap Backpackers kicked off “Begin Your Bibimbap—A Bowl of Healthiness”, sponsored by CJ FoodVille, on May 12, and will continue for 27 weeks. This project aims at introducing and promoting Bibimbap by suggesting it as a healthy and well-balanced meal. For more information, visit their blog at \url{http://backpackers-group.com/}
entrepreneurs in the EUSKCGC, and Koreatown entrepreneurs both in Manhattan and Flushing, donated Korean food for 300 participants after the event.

For NYU’s KGSA World Cup event, 1,500 Ultimate Koreatown World Cup Passcards containing the information of Koreatown stores who sponsored the event were made in return for financial support by businesspeople in Koreatown; non-Koreans introduced to the culture through the event now had a convenient way to continue their consumption of that culture, benefiting Koreatown proprietors. Similarly, during “the Korean Table,” KANA made and distributed a restaurant guide map for potential non-Korean customers. The restaurants listed on the map included their sponsors that have gained media attention: Danji, Yogi Korean Tacos, Kristalbelli, Cho Dang Gol, Mew Izakaya, Food Gallery 32, Soju Haus, Take 31, Hanjan, Jungsil, San Soo Kap San, and Dotory. Except Dotory in Brooklyn and San Soo Kap San 2 in Flushing, Queens, these restaurants are located near or in Manhattan’s Koreatown, although KANA initially meant to expand their map to non-Koreatown businesses, such as in Brooklyn and other parts of Manhattan (Interview with a co-president of KANA in July, 2014).
Visualizing a Korean food scene based on their culinary perceptions, they tried to attract and direct non-Koreans to Korean culture in general -- and specifically by visiting Korean restaurants. Through this project, they are sending two messages. The first message was sent to non-Koreans unfamiliar with Korean food: “here is a list of Korean restaurants, so indulge yourself into a new food and culture.” Another message was directed to Korean nationals; having posted this map on their Facebook page, they suggest in Korean, “what about dinner at one of these Korean restaurants introduced in this map?” They recognize the role of Koreans in cultural

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132 This map was downloaded in KANA’s facebook page. For more information, visit [https://ko-kr.facebook.com/kanainfo](https://ko-kr.facebook.com/kanainfo)
promotion as transmitters, and encourage others to join in the collective project. This message was also shared by Bibimbap Backpackers on their blog: a photo of three students is captioned, “these guys asked us where they could taste Bibimbap, so we kindly informed them that there are many options on 32nd Street.” 32nd Street is thus re-imagined and consumed as a space where one can explore Korea’s culinary culture at the heart of Manhattan.

Some participants do not limit themselves promoting Korean food consumption, and seek to recreate and reproduce the image of Koreatown as the “total cultural space” shown on the World Cup Passcards: “feel it” as you visit the Hanbok (traditional Korean clothing) museum; “taste it” as you taste Korean food at Korean restaurants; “look it” as you receive skin care and message services; “enjoy it” as you drink and enjoy at bars and lounges; “sing it” at Noraebang.
In this sense, Koreatown is “an imagined property” collectively constructed within a notion of “the nation” and shared by its members, as well as a soon-to-be “total cultural space” where one can explore not only Korean food and Korean-style entertainment, but Korean culture in general. As a platform for the exploration of Korean culture and the nation, the KSA at NYU

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133 Source: http://closeup-usa.tistory.com/category/KBI%20%ED%95%9C%EA%B5%AD%20%EC%95%8C%EB%A6%AC%EA%B8%B0%20%ED%94%84%EB%A1%9C%EC%A0%9D%ED%8A%B8%5B%EB%89%B4%EC%9A%95%5D%20%ED%95%9C%EA%B8%80%20%EC%9B%94%EB%93%9C%EC%BB%B5%20%ED%8B%B0%EC%85%94%EC%B8%A0
also included information about the KCS New York and KTO, promoting the idea of visiting Korea in the future. When the KCS, under Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York is finally relocated near Koreatown, Koreatown will offer more cultural options, e.g. art galleries, Korean classes, and theater, not limiting itself as a space for consumption and nightlife entertainment.

**Consuming a Distorted Culture**

While some Korean nationals, particularly those who are members of Korean organizations, actively engage in nation branding and cultural promotion projects in New York City, most Korean nationals are not aware of “nation branding,” and uninterested in direct participation. Rather, they recreate Koreatown in their presence as consumers who understand Korean culture through a nation lens, and as cultural transmitters within their non-exclusively Korean social networks. In this process, less active Korean nationals reconstruct Koreatown as a platform for transmitting Korean culture in a global city despite a belief that the space is a distortion, failing to capture Korea’s authentic culinary and consumption scenes.

For most Korean nationals, particularly those who reside in New York, Koreatown is unsatisfactory not only in terms of physical atmosphere of the space, e.g. outmoded interiors and dirty streets, but also in terms of tastes and menus. Authenticity is one of the most frequently encountered terms when Korean nationals describe Korean food. Korean food produced by immigrants and their children has been modified by the different tastes and availability of products in the U.S. As discussed in Chapter 4, many Koreatown entrepreneurs, particularly younger businesspeople who regularly visit Seoul, try to keep up Korean trends and bring them
back to New York’s Koreatowns; yet Korean nationals do not see their attempts effectively displayed in Koreatown. Eunhye, a 22-year-old language student, recounts her disappointment with the Korean food available:

I was an exchange student. …I had been craving Korean food so much while living in Stony Brook. … One day we planned to visit New York. I just saw a Korean restaurant at the corner of 32nd Street and Broadway as soon as we got off the train at Penn Station. Then we realized that they served breakfast [for reasonable prices], so we went there and had Kimchi Jjigae [Kimchi stew]. …. Oh, my god, it was too salty.

-Eunhye, 22-year-old language student

Seasoning frequently came up regarding the taste of Korean food in Koreatown. For most Koreans, Koreatown food is either too sweet or too salty, as it is modified to cater non-Koreans unaccustomed to authentic Korean flavors and predisposed to the taste of U.S.-modified Chinese and Japanese cuisines. The menus are similarly seen as not reflecting the taste of Korea. Jieun, a 28-year-old graduate student, a foodie who often visited popular restaurants in Seoul, finds that the attempt at universality among Korean restaurants in Koreatown prevents them from developing unique flavors: “see their menu. These restaurants put all the Korean foods in their menu.” Nahee points out that “[Korean restaurants] just use the same broth and marinade for all the food.” Sung, a 26-year-old graduate student born and raised in Britain, points out that “this Korean restaurant sells everything[,] you’ll never find [that] in Korea, they only sell one thing at a time.”
Koreatown restaurants’ food options distort what the food map looks like in Korea. While the government controlled and restricted citizens’ food choices in the 1960s and ‘70s, food now is consumed for individual pleasure, and eating-out has been a cultural practice since the 1980s. As in other parts of the globe, an increasing numbers of Korean foodies in the early 2000s were catching up to two global trends in food: an emphasis on ‘slow’, local and traditional food, with an increasing popularity of ordinary Korean food; and the growing popularity of cosmopolitan food culture, particularly European or Japanese fine or casual dining and bakeries. This was due to the rise of new food knowledge produced by the media through reality TV shows that discover unknown restaurants, and reviews by well-known “power bloggers”. The most popular Korean restaurants specialize in a few items, with secret recipes that handed down over generations – and marketed as “tradition,” “taste of home” or “taste of

134 Due to food crises throughout the colonial period and Korean War, the South Korean government since the 1950s has practiced several national policies to reduce white rice consumption, and ultimately to control the everyday diet. *Honpunshik Changny-ö Undong* [Movement on encouragement of mixed grains and flour based food consumption], which began in the 1960s during the Park Administration, made use of the increased availability of flour through U.S. food aid in 1956; although it was called a “movement,” it was in fact an administrative order, and penetrated schools and markets. From 1964, restaurants were investigated to ensure that their food contained at least 25% barley- or flour-based food; from 1969, the government restricted restaurants to selling only non-rice based foods between 11a.m. and 5p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Students’ lunch boxes likewise were often checked by teachers (National Archives of Korea, [link](http://theme.archives.go.kr/next/foodProduct/economyDrive.do); Kong 2008). During this time, flour was advertised as healthy food by the government; instant noodles, subsidized by the government, became popular.

135 Through the top-down government policies for the globalization of Korean food, the cuisine has been rebranded as “slow, traditional and healthy.” Fermented foods such as Kimchi (spicy fermented cabbage), Ganjang (soybean sauce), Gochujang (red pepper paste) and Doenjang (soybean paste) have gained attention as traditional healthy foods boasting deep flavors (So 2007; Seo 2012). The media has continuously supported this by connecting Korean food to the ‘slow food’ movement. In the early 2000s, Korean media introduced slow food movement; in the mid-2000, new terms, indicating a new lifestyle, e.g. LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability), slobbie, and well-being, are intensively introduced and cited in Korean media.
mother;” as stated in the popular food cartoon, Sikgaek [foodies or gourmets], “the most tasty foods in the world are equal to numbers of mothers in the world,” a saying that has come to represent Korea’s food culture (Hur 2003; Ko and Lee 2009; Park 2011). Authentic Korean food is now realized in a market sphere, in restaurant industries —particularly small, relatively old, traditional restaurants. Specialization rather than standardization is marked, and marketed, as most authentic.

For Korean nationals, the food experience in New York City is satisfactory in terms of the Western style dining opportunities, as the city itself is known as one of the global centers of food adventures. Travelers exposed to global or American culinary culture are eager to explore new restaurants, as they did in Korea. Yet unlike Korean restaurants in Korea, Korean restaurants in Manhattan’s Koreatown never satisfy Korean customers’ needs. As many food items as possible, from BBQ to Bibimbap, are offered in the same restaurant; one of the most popular Korean restaurants on 32nd Street, Kunjip, has 87 items on their menu, while Kum Gang San provides 68 items excluding desserts. In Korea, these restaurants would not attract customers because neither delivers “its specialty.” These restaurants also duplicate cheap bunsikjips, inexpensive snack restaurants that provide various inexpensive foods in large portions without any specialties. In this context, Korean food in New York City, particularly as practiced by earlier immigrants, are not authentic enough for Korean nationals and distort the authentic Korean culinary culture which they feel should be displayed in Koreatown.

Although the Korean government’s top-down cultural policies are designed to internationally promote Korean culture and increase national profit through nation branding

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I did not count items on the lunch menus that duplicate the dinner menu.
projects, consumers are not always aware of official involvement in the workings of the ethnic enclaves. In Koreatown, governmental influence is particularly obvious in the presence of Korean transnational corporations; many Korean nationals recognize these branded goods, and often prefer to consume those over immigrant-run restaurants. Jieun, a 28-year-old graduate student, highlights this in talking of her preference for Paris Baguette.\(^\text{137}\)

I often go to Paris Baguette. Tastes the same as I had in Korea. \textit{Tastes the same!} In most of the restaurants in Koreatown, they modify the taste to cater non-Koreans, but [Paris Baguette] does taste the same [as in Korea].

-Jieun, 28-year-old graduate student

Yoojin compares Paris Baguette favorably to the immigrant-own franchise Koryedang, noting that the latter is not up to date with trends in Korea. “Well, Koryedang? I have been there, but I do not understand why people go there. They are not so good [compared to Paris Baguette].” Koryedang was popular in Korea during the 1990s, with older Korean style buns and cakes. For Korean nationals, the bakery showcased their memory of childhood, but at higher prices.

Yet their past taste memories do not always match with what was. Rooted in the subjective memories of their own contemporary cultural practices, nostalgia can distort or magnify reality. Eunjung, a 23-year-old college student, says that “to be honest with you, Paris

\(^{137}\) At the time of my intensive fieldwork in 2012 spring and summer, Tour Les Jours was not open yet, but instead, there was \textit{Koryedang}, a South Korea’s old franchise, which was popular in the 1990s but lost its popularity in the 2000s and disappeared in metropolitan Seoul. During the fieldwork in Seoul in summer 2012, I received a message from one of my Korean informants that Koryedang became Tours Les Jours, the second most popular bakery franchise in South Korea. It was very surprising for me, because the owner of Koryedang told me that he did not have any plan to change their menu during the interview with him in 2009, although there was on-going pressure due to the competition with Paris Baguette in Flushing.
Baguette is just common, not so special in Korea. But I often go there [on 32nd Street], because it tastes really good. When I had them in Korea, I was like, it’s good, but when I have them here, I am like, oh my good this is so tasty!”

Franchise goods are considered the most standardized, and least authentic and local; yet in New York, “Korean” franchise goods deliver different a cultural code. As Jieun says, for many Korean nationals, the standardized baked goods of Korea can be considered more authentic than the Korean food modified by immigrants or children of immigrants. It is often reported that Western tourists in non-Western countries end up going to franchise restaurants or cafes, e.g. McDonalds’, KFC or Starbucks, when encountering “ethnic food” or “new culinary culture.” As unfamiliar culinary culture causes and reinforces anxiety and alienation, franchises convey a sense of comfort, familiarity and home (Bardhi, Ostberg and Bengtsson 2010). Korean nationals generally are satisfied with their non-Korean food options in New York City; it is what should be familiar that they find disappointing. Thus most Korean nationals frequent Korean chains such as Paris Baguette, Tous Les Jours, Red Mango, and Bonchon and Kyochon Chicken; they feel that they are in Seoul when consuming standardized goods, and these franchises are in the right location to promote “real Korean culture” and to make Koreatown look more modern, clean and Korean, as they think it should be.

Embarrassment or Pride in the National Space

Although many Korean nationals do not have any emotional attachment to the space of Koreatown itself, they explicitly express embarrassment and shame over Koreatown as the only space representing Korean culture in Manhattan. Minji expressed her frustrations:
[32\textsuperscript{nd} Street] looks like one of the streets of Seoul in the late ‘80s and the early ‘90s from old videos or photos I watched. I feel so shamed whenever I see 32\textsuperscript{nd} Street, because [non-Koreans] assume that streets of Korea would look like this.

-Minji, a former NYU student

Minji felt *shamed* in and by Koreatown. Minji’s frustration is rooted in her perspective in which Koreatown does not positively duplicate Seoul’s cosmopolitan, fashionable, and rapidly changing urban landscape; rather, Koreatown’s urban landscape mirrors *old Seoul*, with a certain time-lag of global flows from Korea to New York City. It is problematic for Minji because non-Korean New Yorkers, potential consumers of Korean culture, may see Korea as lagging and dingy based on pseudo-cultural experiences in Koreatown. Yet Minji’s perspective on Koreatown,\textsuperscript{138} like that of other Korean nationals, is based on a projection of the nation itself and the nation’s reputation. In this process of “authentification” (Jackson 1999), laying claim to authenticity of Korean food and culture becomes a tool of power (Zukin 2009; 2010) for Korean nationals, as they confirm that “we”, Koreans, define authentic Korean culture -- most notably in contrast with Korean immigrants and their children, who cannot claim personal understanding of the nation’s culture and taste.\textsuperscript{139} The inauthenticity of restaurants in Koreatown confirms their status as experts on, and representatives of, national culture.

\textsuperscript{138} Minji grew up in upper middle class family. Her parents moved to Shanghai for business, and sent their children to an American school while there; she often went Seoul for private education (e.g. SAT classes) during breaks as well as to summer schools and leadership camps in the U.S. every summer break since junior high school. She came to New York for college. During her stay in New York, she frequently went back and forth between Korea and the U.S. She had to return to Korean after graduating from NYU because the U.S. only allows students with F1 visa to stay a year past graduation.

\textsuperscript{139} It is also correlated with class-based consumption. Identifying herself as upper-middle class, Minji often compares her consumption experience in Seoul to that in New York. Seoul is
At the same time, for some Korean nationals, Koreatown is a space where Korean nationals can be confident and proud as Korean citizens by confirming the increasing popularity of Korean culture and increased non-Korean presence in Koreatown. Yoojin, a 28-year-old graduate student, observes that:

When I was in New York a few years ago, Hallyu was not present in New York City. It seemed like there was little bit, but it was not prominent. Mostly Koreans, like Korean students and Korean office workers, hung out, but now surprisingly you see many non-Koreans. I am pleased with these foreigners [presenting themselves in Koreatown]. …. because I could see Korean culture finally is getting popular [in New York]. … You see many foreigners coming to Chinatown and Japantown, but it was not the case in Koreatown.

-Yoojin, a 28-year-old graduate student

Although Yoojin often expresses her negative impression of Koreatown, the presence of non-Koreans is a way in which she confirms the popularity of Korean culture and the nation’s international status. Discovery of Korean culture by non-Koreans in New York City marks the city as a center of global culture; the Korean nation as projected in Koreatown is thus a form of cultural success, a statement of global presence. Yoojin does not explicitly express any emotional attachment or ownership to the space itself; indeed, she rejects it. Yet her reaction toward Koreatown is rooted in her feelings for her nation as an imagined community, hence the common refrain, “Korea, as a well-known nation.” When Kyujin, a 32-year-old graduate student, says she “felt proud that Koreatown was doing okay,” she is projecting Koreatown as the imagined property where the nation and its culture should be given due recognized by non-Korean Others.

catching up to global trends pretty quickly; when she went back to Seoul for break, she found that luxurious department stores in the District of Gangnam in Seoul displayed collections of rare items that were often hard to find in New York City. Yet Koreatown was not reflecting the speed of Korea’s consumption.
The presence of Korean franchises also confirm the global awareness of Korean (consumer) culture and the nation’s status. The Korean franchises on 32nd Street often are connected to “refined, trendy, modern, contemporary and clean” stores among Koreans, in contrast with the “old, dingy, wack, played-out and outdated” immigrant-own restaurants. Korean nationals also believe that these franchise stores help Koreatown promote itself as a more modern, cleaner, and “better” space, in which the landscape of Korea’s contemporary consumerism is showcased for non-Korean customers. Ayoung, who currently resides in Boston, states:

During the first visit [in 2006], the signboards were so old. Yet now I see Kyochon Chicken. That’s pretty trendy [in terms of their interiors and signboard]. It’s getting better. More [modern and cleaner] stores are opening. What about Paris Baguette?
-Ayoung, 29-year-old graduate student

For Ayoung, the space was developing in a positive way, in part because the increasing number of Korean franchises and Korean corporations’ direct investment reflect new trends in South Korea. In this sense, Koreatown is a space where one can enjoy contemporary “authentic” Korean culture, not modified or reshaped by immigrants, but directly transferred from Korea, specifically Seoul. For some Korean nationals, these standardized Korean foods offered by Korean corporations should be promoted and advertised in order to reinvent this space as more modern, cosmopolitan and fancier -- more of a transclave rather than enclave. A brighter image of Koreatown would reflect well on Korea, and thus on Koreans. This hope of course, whether they recognize it or not, is in line with government policies practiced by the Korean Food Foundation, as seen in Chapters 3 and 4.
A platform for introducing Korea and Korean culture

In this process, ordinary Korean nationals use Koreatown as a platform to introducing Korean culture to non-Korean audience with a hope that they will become consumers of Hallyu in general and Korean food in particular. Hallyu in general, however, is not yet fully present in New York City; roughly half of the interviewees were skeptical about the success of Hallyu in New York City. Food is thus often seen as leading the way for Korean culture.

Most Korean nationals point out that as Korean food is getting popular in New York, Korean pop culture – pop music, drama and movies, as well as online games -- is also making inroads. The popularity in New York of pop culture items is closely linked to generation; Korean nationals in their 20s find pop music and dramas popular among non-Korean acquaintances, while those in their 30s note interest in movies, particularly by auteurs such as Chan-wook Park, Joon-Ho Bong and Ki-duk Kim. Joohyun, a 38-year-old scholar whose focus is Korean art and culture, points to academic job postings and conference presentations as proof of the increasing interest in the Korean film industry and movie discourse. Younger Korean nationals find that that Korean dramas and pop music are the most popular cultural items among non-Koreans. Seoyoung, a 21-year-old college student, believes that Korean pop music is gaining popularity based on hearing Korean pop songs on random people’s earphones on the streets of New York. Korean fashion and cosmetics are also increasingly popular, especially among Asian Hallyu fans.

These interests in Korean pop culture among Hallyu fans, as well as the growing popularity of ethnic food in general in New York City, attract non-Koreans to Koreatown. Some non-Koreans prefer to visit with Korean acquaintances, while some Korean nationals desire to have non-Korean associates visit Koreatown for “a taste of Korea”, although they truly do not
believe the food is authentic enough. Sangjin, a 24-year-old language student, is one of the most active individual participants in nation branding in Koreatown. Sangjin joined “NYC Meetups,” an online social group,\(^\text{140}\) in order to expand his social circle; among several subgroups, he belongs to a “Meetup” between Asian men and Black women. When he began to spend time with Black women in the social group, he was surprised that many of them were intrigued by Korean culture and food and by the nation itself.

A lot of them know about Korea. Compared to the past, Korea is well-known. The image of Korea is getting better. I think some of them truly think that Korea is trendy. … Some said that they would like to travel to Korea, learn Korean language, get to know Korean culture, and willing to try Korean food. … One of them was really into Korean food, so I took her to Koreatown…. She is from Gabon. … I asked her if she had specific food in her mind, yet she was like, I would not mind anything if it is Korean food. Even she was like, I love hot and spicy food. So we went to the food court [on 32\(^{\text{nd}}\) Street] and had Yukgaejang [spicy beef-based soup with vegetables]. She was sweating buckets, but loved it. … She really wanted to make Korean friends.

-Sangjin, a 24-year-old language student

Korean culture, particularly food, was an important (if unforeseen) medium through which Sangjin connected with new people and a new culture. As one of few Korean males in the social group,\(^\text{141}\) Sangjin soon became a cultural transmitter to non-Korean members who were enthusiastic about learning Korean culture, both those who were fans of Hallyu and foodies who sought new tastes. Eunji, a 34-year-old artist, also introduced Korean food to her non-Korean

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\(^{140}\) Meetup (www.meetup.com) is an online website that connects individuals who share the same interests from various locations. It also expedites offline meetings among members of a social group. For New York City social groups, visit http://new-york-city.meetup.com/cities/us/ny/new_york/

\(^{141}\) In Sangjin’s Meetup group, most of the men were Chinese. Sangjin thought that being a Korean male in the group thus gained him more attention from the Black women in the group.
friends; although this White Canadian couple live in Brooklyn and are not necessarily interested in Korean culture in general, they travel to Manhattan at least once a week for a Korean food venture, becoming Korean food experts themselves, as they evaluate each restaurant in Koreatown. Yet such cultural transmission is limited to “open-minded” non-Koreans, who do not hesitate to immerse themselves in an unfamiliar culture.

The demographic change in Koreatown is particularly notably observed by those Korean nationals who have stayed in New York City longer than recent arrivals, because they have observed changes in Koreatown over time. In the early 2000s, Koreatown mostly offered services for Korean ethnics, particularly yuhaksaeng [international students]; nowadays, non-Koreans enjoy their meals without any Korean or Asian associates. Joohyun has often heard her acquaintances talking about Korean food since around 2008; she believes that this coincided with the growing number of Korean franchises targeting non-Koreans in Koreatown, as well as mainstream media attention through news and magazine coverage and famous chefs complimenting Korean food and creating innovative fusion Korean food.

Although Korean nationals may spend time in Koreatown and bring non-Korean associates to the area to introduce them to Korean food, they do not generally express emotional attachment to the space. However, two Korean interviewees, both language students, did proclaim a feeling of ownership in this space when they acted as introducing agents for non-Koreans; when taking non-Koreans through Koreatown, their knowledge of the culture practiced in this space encouraged them to treat it as their own.

I can be a cultural expert in this space. …[non-Korean] friends particularly depend upon me [while in Koreatown], because they admit that I know Korean food and culture more than any other foreign friends.
- Sangjin, a 24-year-old language student

In this sense, Koreatown is a space where Korean nationals can be confident and proud as Korean citizens by confirming the increasing popularity of Korean culture, directly transmitted from Korea, even if their general feelings towards Koreatown itself are negative. Due to their clear memories of consumption in important Korean cities, especially Seoul, they automatically compare Koreatown to Seoul consumption spaces; therefore, their insecurity as foreign and temporary residents in this city is mitigated in Koreatown as a space in which they can claim their Koreanness.

**Conclusion**

Korean nationals reinvent Koreatown from below as a platform for the transmission of Korean culture. Some actively participate in cultural events by collaborating with government agencies, Korean corporations and Koreatown entrepreneurs, and by promoting Koreatown as a *transclave* where one can experience contemporary Korean culture directly transferred from Korea. More often, however, Korean nationals are indirectly involved in nation branding projects as cultural transmitters through consumption. In this way, Koreatown is reconstructed by Korean nationals as separate from and often not communicating with the preexisting Korean culture reshaped by immigrants and their children.

In Chapter 6, I will turn to another consumer group: Korean Americans, mostly 1.5 and second generation, in their 20s and 30s. Consisting of working adults and college students, they are part of a consumer generation in the United States actively engaging with ethnic culture to develop their own cultural identity and feel a sense of belonging. While Korean nationals make
functional visits to Koreatown, the ethnic consumption practices of Korean Americans is more symbolic; indeed, ethnic consumption is one of the greatest tools with which Korean Americans build their identity as Korean Americans. While Korean nationals do not necessarily have emotional attachment to the space itself and see it through a national lens, Korean Americans view Koreatown through ethnicity; thus it becomes a space where they can associate themselves with their ethnic culture and build their personal ethnic identity.
Chapter 6.

Food, Culture and Journey to Identity: Korean Americans in Koreatown

"My birth mother cooked all my favorite foods that I loved as a baby [after we reunited in New York]. They didn’t look familiar to me. But as soon as I tasted them, a flood of memories came back. Having that memory in my taste buds validated the fact that I was Korean." Marja Vongerichten, Interview with Asian Fortune News

On a Thursday evening in the late 1990s, Younghee, a Columbia University student, should have been preparing for the upcoming quiz in her 9:00 a.m. Korean class. Yet she and her classmates were very busy with something else. She recounted her Thursday routine in a 2010 interview:

“"My first semester we went fairly off. Like stupidly we would go Thursday night. Every week would have a language class at 9 in the morning, on Fridays there would be a quiz. And we would be like, we’re going to take out stuff and go study at a Korean restaurant downtown. We did drink but I just thought it was the stupidest thing in the world. And you know, I would then have to go take a Korean language class the next morning. This was a fairly regular thing.”

-Younghee, a 33-year-old graduate student

Younghee, a biracial Korean American with a second generation Korean American father and a white mother, was struggling with her heritage language. Her father did not speak Korean; however, he was deeply engaged in a progressive political organization that focuses on Korea-related issues, and her grandfather, who came to the U.S. during the Japanese colonization of

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142 As noted in Chapters 3 and 4, Marja Vongerichten is a biracial Korean American, born in 1976 to a Korean mother and an African American father stationed in South Korea. Her biological father left her biological mother when she was seven months pregnant. Marja Vongerichten was adopted in 1979 to African American parents, and grew up in Virginia. She became well-known through her PBS television series, Kimchi Chronicles. See her interview with Asian Fortune News: http://www.asianfortunenews.com/article_0912.php?article_id=14
Korea, further influenced Younghee’s interest in their ancestral home.\textsuperscript{143} Her first Korean class, and the Korean culture that she experienced through the classes and KSA (Korean Student Association) at Columbia University, were different from what she thought they would be; but they were crucial as her first exposure to Korean culture through non-relatives, her Korean peers.

Although Younghee was first brought to Koreatown by her uncle when she got to college, it was other Korean American college students with whom she spent time in Koreatown; “Koreatown was a kind of public space” for Korean Americans seeking shared experiences as members of that group. For Younghee, Koreatown was a place for her to practice being Korean.

As a group, Korean Americans assimilate into the American mainstream through economic growth and institutional change (Gans 1992; Portes and Zhou 1993; Alba and Nee 1997; Perlmann and Waldinger 1998; Zhou 1997) and often are stereotyped as part of a ‘model minority’ by the mainstream media and policy makers. However, they often feel caught between a racialized minority status and the ‘mainstream’ culture surrounding them (Kibria 2003; Dhingra 2007). Their racial difference often prompts Korean Americans to maintain transnational ties with the motherland; as teens and young adults, this is particularly present in cultural and ethnic consumption, e.g. watching Korean dramas and movies, listening to Korean pop music, and eating Korean foods. Many younger Korean Americans return to Korea for a short period of time to travel and visit their relatives, while some stay longer to learn Korean and work.

\textsuperscript{143} Due to her grandparents’ political awareness, Younghee grew up with a greater knowledge of Korean history and politics than most other Korean Americans. Her grandparents spoke Korean to each other, but while they would teach some Korean words, they did not push their children to learn the language.
Most research on transnational activities among children of immigrants in the U.S. centers on the Caribbean and Latin American groups (Portes 1996; Levitt 2001; Levitt and Waters 2002), whose motherlands are relatively physically close to the receiving country. The increasing number of children of Asian immigrants who create and maintain transnational ties to their countries of origin, however, has not garnered much attention beyond occasional scholarship (Espiritu 2003; Louie 2004; Jain 2012). Korean Americans maintain transnational ties differently partially due to distance; furthermore, with a racial status unique in the U.S. for not falling neatly within the Black-White spectrum, Korean Americans seek ways of feeling and expressing their ethnic identity through transnational activities and practices.

In this process, Koreatown becomes a public ground on which Korean Americans maintain and practice their transnational ties to Korea through cultural and ethnic consumption and entertainment. Koreatown is one of the few public spaces for enjoying what ethnic culture they grew up with privately. As young children, Korean Americans often are immersed in Korean culture through Korean food, speaking limited Korean with parents and relatives or taking Korean language classes, and going to Korean churches. However, these cultural activities often occur in the private sphere, with the exception of religious activities. But in young adulthood, many aim to experience Korean culture outside of the home; Koreatown, a public space, plays a role for younger Koreans who want to connect with Korean culture, develop an ethnic identity through consumption, and maintain transnational ties to their motherland.

Korean Americans use Koreatown to practice their Koreanness and their ethnic identity, in order to overcome their feeling of ethnic distance and racial insecurity. In “[their] space”, they claim their “ethnic authenticity,” yet commercialized, with racial insecurity fading away in the
face of collective understanding of “[their] own culture and history” in the U.S. Where Korean nationals believe that the space is outdated, the space has existed and will continue to do so by reflecting Koreans’ collective struggle as a racialized ethnic and cultural minority, whose culture has never, until recently, received attention by the U.S. mainstream.

Unlike Korean nationals, Korean Americans see Koreatown in ethnic rather than national terms; unlike Korean nationals, whose perception is based on their understanding of the nation’s culture, Korean Americans do not necessarily realize that the space—in dishes, aesthetics and atmosphere—does not reflect what Korea looks like today. While Korean nationals see Koreatown as outdated, dirty and dingy, Korean Americans see it as a cultural and ethnic space that exists outside of time.

Therefore, despite not always recognizing the influence and investment of the Korean government in Koreatown, Korean Americans express great pleasure in the slowly growing popularity of Korean culture in the U.S. among non-Korean population. Having grown up in a context where their culture was often singled out for being unique, strange, and exotic, this confirmation of the new popularity of their culture within the U.S. mainstream and their economic and educational incorporations to the U.S. mainstream validates their identity; they are both consumers of the culture in the space and transmitters of the culture to their non-Korean associates. Many often voluntarily become “a tour guide” in their space, although other resent the invasion by non-Koreans. In this way, they indirectly participate in the nation branding project, whether intentionally or not, fulfilling the Korean government’s emphasis on the role of the Korean diaspora in the nation branding projects by Korean government.
In this chapter, I analyze 28 interviews with Korean Americans, conducted largely in New York City (two interviews took place in Seoul). Of these, 18 interviewees identify as second-generation, while 7 are 1.5-generation; their parents immigrated to the U.S in the 1970s and ‘80s. One informant identify herself as 2.5 generation, whose mother came to the U.S. as an adolescence, while one interviewee identifies as third-generation Korean American, whose grandparents emigrated during the Japanese colonial era. Three hold dual citizenship; they were born in the U.S., returned to Korea at an early age with their parents, then returned to the U.S. for school; all three went to college in the U.S. but returned to Korea after graduation; and none of them identify themselves within the generation category, either 1.5 or second generation. Most of the Korean Americans in my sample hold or are in the process of receiving bachelor’s degrees; some also have master’s degrees, while two hold a doctoral degree; only one interviewee left school without completing a bachelor’s. Twenty-five lived in New York at the time of the interviews (in 2010 and ’12); one interviewee was visiting his family in New York at the time of the interview but lived in Virginia; and two returned to Seoul after graduating from a college in New York. Some participants were comfortable with both languages; twenty-four interviews were conducted in English, and four in Korean.

144 Although I exclusively targeted Korean Americans in their 20s and 30s, this sample also include three Korean Americans in their 40s for purposes of comparison. This generation, born in the 1960s and the early 70s, grew up when Korean culture was not visible in New York City; they maintained their ethnic roots by speaking Korean with their parents and engaging in the Korean community through grassroots organizations and churches.
**Being Transnational: ties to the home nation**

Laura returned to the U.S. a few years ago, after having worked and lived in Seoul for three years, and settled down in New York to go to graduate school. She is a 30-year-old second generation Korean American, born and raised in a small town on the East Coast. As with many other immigrants, her parents put enormous effort into and emphasis on their children’s education; after graduating from a private high school in a small town on the East Coast, Laura went to a prestigious private college in Boston, and just earned her master’s degree from Columbia University. She thus falls within the stereotype of the “typical” studious and intelligent “model minority (Takaki 1998[2012]; Tuan 1998; Fong 2002; Wing 2007).” Yet growing up in a predominantly white town on the East Coast, Laura often questioned the differences between her culture and that of most of her friends. Her trips to Korea during college and after graduation changed the way in which she perceived herself and her ethnic culture; after having experienced a series of identity crisis both in the U.S. and in South Korea, which she thought that she did not belong to any of societies, she now is racially politicized as a woman of color, very active in the people of color movements, and accepts her Koreanness or Korean Americanness.

Like Laura, many Korean Americans relocate themselves in Korea, whether it is short term or long term, to travel and work. In 2013, 45,253 Korean Americans returned to South Korea with H2, F1, F4, F5, F6, or E visas,\(^\text{145}\) according to the Korea Immigration Service;

\(^{145}\) According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “overseas Koreans with foreign nationality, either a person who had had Korean nationality and acquired foreign nationality or a person whose either of parents or either of grandparents with Korean nationality acquired foreign nationality” can obtain a special visa, F4. Visits to Korea are possible with H2 (working visit), F1 (visiting and staying with relatives), F5 (Permanent resident), F6 (Marriage to Korean Citizen) or E visas (long-term employment). For further information, visit Hi Korea (e-Government for foreigners) at
722,315 Americans, whether of Korean descent or not, entered Korea. Korean Americans were the second largest Korean diaspora group (behind Korean Chinese), comprising 7.5% of all return migrants; the number of Korean Americans who returned to South Korea has tripled since 2002, as shown in Figure 33.

*This data does not include Korean Americans who visit Korea for less than 90 days. **All data by year are gathered from the Immigration Statistics Annual Report by Korea Immigration Service. Graph was reconstructed by the author, based on the Annual Reports.

http://www.hikorea.go.kr/pt/InfoDetailR_en.pt?categoryId=2&parentId=382&catSeq=&showMenuId=374

146 U.S. citizens may stay in Korea without a visa for less than 90 days, due to the visa waiver program.
There are a few reasons for Korean Americans to relocate to South Korea. For some, it is a journey into their ethnic identity and roots, while others seek new economic and educational opportunities for English speakers in South Korea. Changes in immigration and travel policies since the 1990s have also eased the relocation process for overseas Koreans, particularly Korean Americans.

Yet their transnational activities are not limited to homeland trips. I identify two additional transnational activities in which Korean Americans engage: consumption of popular culture and food both in both the private and public spheres, and participation in the entertainment and consumption of Koreatown.

I argue that, unlike children of earlier immigrants, such as the Italians and Irish considered in Herbert Gans’ work (1979), Korean Americans’ experience of ethnic identification is not just symbolic but more transnational than before (Louie 2004). As Gans argues, the ethnic identity of later generations (in his work, the third generation) becomes more symbolic: the feeling of being ethnic, often explored by finding ways of feeling and expressing that identity without risking social costs. Symbolic ethnicity, according to Gans, has diverse forms: from consumer goods, notably ethnic food, and holidays to political involvement, such as nationalist movements, and religious ceremonies. Activities, especially nationalist movements, are somewhat transnational, but largely take place in the U.S.. Moreover, many Korean Americans are not involved in nationalist ideology and/or participation in political movements in South Korea.

In the 1990s, Gans wrote that some ethnic revivals may be closely related to consumerism and the marketplace; ethnicity is re-identified and reconfirmed through consumer culture in a
realm of market economy. Accordingly, I here focus on consumer goods, products of creative economy, emphasized in the nation branding projects by South Korean government. I

I look at the three overarching factors leading to transnational activities by Korean Americans: the experience of being a racial minority in the U.S.; the upward mobility of their country of origin in world economy from one of the poorest countries to a wealthy nation; and South Korea’s creative economy, soft-power, and diasporic policies to attract members of the Korean diaspora to invest in the nation following the financial crisis of 1997. These factors have transformed the understanding of homeland and practice of transnational ties among Korean Americans by redirecting more national/ethnic pride to the heritage country.

Journey for ethnic identity in the U.S.

Among ethnic Koreans outside of Korea, Korean Americans are the most readily embraced by the Korean government and Korean corporations in terms of economic relationship to the homeland. At the macro level, policy changes accelerated with the enactment of the Overseas Koreans Act in 1999, in which the South Korean government began to pay more

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147 After the financial crisis of 1997, the government highlighted the importance of overseas Koreans on international investment in Korea, by easing the financial restrictions on the Korean diaspora. “Buy Korea” became a theme in major Korean media to indicate the growing foreign investments in South Korea, particularly after the global financial crisis of 2008; wealthier Korean Americans and Korean Canadians were main participants in this trend with investments in real estate and hwantech (Hong 2008; Lee 2008), a new way of financial investment by taking advantage of the foreign exchange rates difference, particularly when Korean currency is devalued. For instance, Korean investors buy dollars when Korean currency is appreciated while the U.S. dollars are cheaper, but resell when Korean currency is devalued. For foreign investors, including Korean Americans, it is the other way around; they send money or invest in the real estate, while the Korean Won is devalued. In fact, the financial crisis was a great economic opportunity for Korean Americans to benefit from the foreign exchange rates difference since Korean currency was devalued by twice; the financial crisis of 2008 in the U.S. also enticed Korean Americans to invest in South Korea, as the Korean currency was devalued.
attention to the Korean diaspora. Indeed, global economic uncertainty at the end of the 20th century drove more Korean Americans to return to the homeland for economic opportunities. In this process, the geographical and cultural distance between countries shrank for many Korean Americans through participation in transnational activities.  

Yet for most of Korean Americans, their journey to their roots is part of a broader formation of ethnic identity which begins around adolescence and develops through early adulthood. The formation of an ethnic identity is not entirely optional (Waters 1992; Espiritu and Ong 1994); while often praised as one of the most economically and educationally successful

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148 The number of overseas Koreans exceeded 7.2 million in 2011, 11% of the Korean population of the year (Song 2014) (the number has decreased somewhat in 2013). Yet it was not until the early 1990s that the South Korean government started paying attention to ethnic Koreans residing outside South Korea. In 1991, ethnic Koreans in China and the former Soviet Union were first recognized in the government’s official statistical data, due to normalization of diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. (September 30, 1990) and China (August 24 of 1992). Some government services, such as language programs to Koreans living in the then-Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and China (Song 2014), were offered as a result. The Overseas Koreans Foundation was founded in 1997 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to embrace overseas Koreans as assets of the nation by providing several services, e.g. educational support for younger generations, economic and political cooperation between Korea and overseas Koreans, and building networks, particularly overseas Korean business people (Hansang network). At the same time, the shortages in low-skilled labor provided a new opportunity for foreign workers from developing countries in Asia and overseas Koreans, particularly Korean Chinese (Seol and Skrentny 2009). In the 1990s, South Korean government and policy makers considered overseas Koreans more desirable than non-Korean immigrants, who might threaten a supposedly (but not actually) ethnically “homogeneous” society. The Industrial Technical Training Programme (ITTP) was favorable to overseas Koreans, by granting separate and large quota and higher wages (Seol and Skrentny 2009). Korean Americans were in an exceptional situation; as shown at Chapters 1, 3 and 4, many Korean immigrants to the U.S., particularly in the earlier post-1965 era, were urban middle class in South Korea, and had strong transnational ties, e.g. New York City’s wholesalers directly importing products from South Korea. These overseas nationals were in a very different position than their Korean Chinese counterparts, whose migration was not entirely voluntary and entailed a separation from the homeland due to the Cold War. The financial crisis of 1997 was a turning point in South Korea embracing more overseas Koreans; while Korean Chinese filled the low-skilled occupations, Korean Americans were targeted for economic investment to South Korea (Kim 2001).
“ethnic Americans”, and considered a “model minority” and “honorary white” (Tuan 1998; Kibria 2003) together with some other Asian groups, Korean Americans must at the same time confront the reality of being stereotyped and perceived as “racialized ethnics” or “forever foreigners” (Espiritu 1992; Tuan 1998; Kibria 2003; Dinghra 2004). Ethnic identity for Korean Americans might be optional, but is largely external and involuntary (Nagel 1994).

Racialized minorities and Korean American identity

Emily, a 23-year-old second-generation Korean American, grew up in a middle class family in Maryland. She is a “typical” Korean American in terms of being perceived by outsiders as a highly assimilated child of immigrants. She studied Journalism and English at New York University and recently started a job in New York. Yet having grown up in a predominately white neighborhood in Maryland, she still vividly remembers her adolescence in terms of her differences and isolation from her peers.

I felt very isolated in middle school and high school. .. I had friends but I felt like I never truly belong anywhere… I was very unhappy in high school… because I didn’t like the people that I was with. I felt like nobody could understand me.

- Emily, a 23-year-old NYU graduate, working in communication

Her parents maintained ties with a Korean community, but primarily at a Korean Christian church. Her mother both encouraged her children to learn about their ethnic roots and wanted them to assimilate into the American mainstream; she regularly drove 40-60 minutes to take the children to the Korean church, not only for the service but also for Saturday Korean classes, where she herself was a teacher. Emily, who became an atheist in college, feels that her
family’s emphasis on a relatively conservative and religious lifestyle further isolated her; she recalls that she believed that her white friends would focus on “partying and cursing,” which she would not participate in because “‘oh no, that’s against God’s law’ or whatever.”

Feelings of isolation and loneliness while growing up in a white neighborhood does not just derive from cultural difference. Race, culturally figured and represented while linked with social structure and practiced as a descriptor of group and individual identity and experience (Omi and Winant 1994), plays the critical role in the process. As some scholars argue, many Korean American teenagers strongly aspire to assimilation by responding to parental emphasis on high achievement (Alba and Nee 2009) or by “acting white;”¹⁴⁹ some identify themselves as an American rather than with a hyphenated descriptor, particularly at an earlier age (Thai 2002) - - what one of my interviewees, Joon, a 37-year-old 1.5 generation Korean American, calls “the cool kids who only hang out with white kids.”

Yet most of my informants, whether they grew up in white or Korean communities, express that they often did not ‘belong to’ or ‘fit into’ the American mainstream, particularly among white peers (Kibria 1997; Thai 2002; Min 2002). Feeling marginalized and rejected, or at least not embraced, by the dominant group, is often rooted in the anti-Asian racism that Korean Americans collectively experience (Espiritu 1992; Kibria 1997; Tuan 1998). Anti-Asian racism often happens in an obvious and overt way, as in the murder of a Chinese American Vincent

¹⁴⁹ In “Black students' school success: Coping with the “burden of ‘acting white,’” Fordhan and Ogbu (1986) argue that Black students often face the “burden of acting white” in order to show good academic performance in school. However, many scholars have criticized culture-focused presentation theory by highlighting structural factors (See Cook & Ludwig 1998; Downey & Ainsworth-Darnell 2002; Ferguson, Ludwig and Rich 2001; Tyson 2002; 2011; Lew 2006).
Chin\textsuperscript{150}, violence and hate crimes against Asians, while most of times it occurs as a form of racial microaggressions in daily life (Sue et al 2007). These microaggressions are more subtle, and not easily recognizable or even necessarily identifiable.

Jenny, a 37-year-old 2.5 generation Korean American who grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood in Washington, D.C., vividly remembers how she was offended at a dance party in junior high school:

If we met people on the outside I would still hear things like, even in Junior High, \textit{Ching Chong} or yeah, those kind of ridiculous things. … So we were going to this dance [party at another school] and then you know I think you had to pick partners and then you were set up with partners and then you know -- some guy said oh I don’t want to dance with her, that \textit{Ching Chong}.

-Jenny, 37-year-old 2.5 generation

Sue, et al. (2006)\textsuperscript{151} define microaggressions as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group (Sue, et al. 2006:p271).” The ‘ching chong’ slur heard by Jenny mocks Asians who are assumed not to be fluent in English and have heavy foreign accents. Jenny, who was born and raised in the U.S., does not have a foreign

\textsuperscript{150} Vincent Chin was a 27-year-old Chinese American hate crime victim, killed in 1982 in Detroit by two white autoworkers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, who assumed that Chin was Japanese and stole their jobs. Despite the homicide, they did not serve any prison time, yet were given probation for three years and $3,780 fines (Chang 1998).

\textsuperscript{151} Sue, et al. (2006) categorize racial microaggressions into eight categories: 1) alien in own land, 2) ascription of intelligence, 3) exotification of Asian women, 4) invalidation of inter-ethnic difference, 5) denial of racial reality, 6) pathologizing cultural values/communication styles, 7) second-class citizenship, and 8) invisibility.
accent; yet this kind of racial insult is nonetheless regularly used to debase and separate her
based on her racialized appearance.

Laura, a 30-year-old editor at a college research center, also shares her experiences with
microaggressions, emphasizing the foreignness of Asian Americans.

I remember once I was in college, and was at the doctor’s office back in Delaware for
break. [The nurse] asked me questions like “Where do you go to school? What’s your
major?” And I was like, “I’m an English major.” Then the nurse was like, “pretty soon
you will speak better than us.” That was one of the critical moments for me, realizing that
[I was different from and not embraced by the White mainstream].

- Laura, a 30-year-old editor

Despite Laura being a native English speaker, she was immediately stereotyped as
“foreigner” who could not speak English well, because of a racialized appearance that rendered
her outside of the category of ‘American’ in White eyes. Language is one of the most significant
markers of foreignness (Kibra 2000), yet the assumption of such “foreignness” was assumed by
Laura’s nurse due to “external identity markers or disidentifiers” (Kibra 2000: p87) that had
nothing to do with the reality of her English fluency. Assumptions of inadequacy regarding
Korean Americans’ language abilities emphasize “the foreignness of Asians (Kibra 2000), as
positioned permanently foreign and inassimilable in the U.S. racial order (Kim 2003). Such

152 Drawing on Omi and Winant’s notion of a racial formation to the naturalized categories and
understandings of race that shape people’s life chances, Claire Jean Kim(2003) develops a new
concept, "triangulation," to explains the location of Asian Americans in the post-1965 American
racial order. Kim argues that Koreans are 1) ranked below whites but above blacks on an axis of
superiority/inferiority, 2) positioned as apart from both groups on an axis of insider/foreigner,
and 3) positioned as permanently foreign and inassimilable.
153 In May of 2013, David Neptune and Ken Tanaka directed a humorous video, “What Kind of
Asian Are You?” In this video, released as part of YouTube's Comedy Week, an Asian American
woman have conversation with a Whit man asks “Where are you from? Your English is perfect,”
assumptions also frequently manifest as White Americans asking “What are you?” or “Where are you from?” Disbelief in the reality of Americanness presented by a racialized Other, this is just as often followed by “Where are you really from?” (Bearden and Randall, 1990: Kibra 2000: Xu et al. 2004). Given proof of nationality, White people will continue to only acknowledge Otherness.

Even ‘positive’ racial stereotypes can function as microagressions. Jay is a 30-year-old second generation Korean American born and raised in Texas, where he was one of only a few Korean kids at his schools. Having graduated from a prestigious university in Missouri and a medical school in Atlanta, he is now a surgeon at a hospital in New York City. While he did not experience serious physical violence due to his race and ethnicity, he constantly had to confront the stereotyping of Asian students as the “model minority.”

I know that typically I think people always feel like we’re are smarter and we’re good at math or something like that. So I felt people cheated off of me a lot, like asking me for help. I mean I spent a lot of time doing math stuff because our parents always promoted that stuff.

-Jay, a 30-year-old surgeon on a jogging trail. She replies “San Diego” but the man repeatedly asks “oh, where are you from?” She says “I was born in Orange Country, but I haven't actually lived there,” but he continues on asking “before that.” She asks him back “before I was born?” which allows him to clarify the racial component of his question: “Where are your people from?” She answers that “Well, my great grandma was from Seoul.” This dialogue, with the assumption that people who ‘look’ Asian are not from the United States but foreigners, is a common experience for many Korean Americans. Although non-Asians argue that this sort of assumption is not meant to be offensive, or is driven by respectful curiosity, this is perhaps the most common microagression experienced by Asian Americans in the U.S. See the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWynJkN5HbQ
Even before he showed high aptitude in school, Jay was pigeonholed as--and expected to conform to--part of the model minority, an overachiever in math and science. His high educational and professional success suggests that he might be considered finally assimilated into the American mainstream. However, like Amy, Emily, Jenny, and Laura, who all grew up in white dominant neighborhoods, Jay often felt that he did not fit in and get along with his peers.

**Ethnic foods as racial marker**

Among the constant stream of microaggressions and subtle and abstruse discrimination, ethnic food, although celebrated and consumed on a daily basis, became a signifier of cultural difference that many Korean Americans confront from an early age. When Laura was young, she wondered why her mother did not cook American food well:

> My mom only made Korean food. On those days that she made like, Western food … so I remember like whenever we had bacon and eggs … when I had to sleep over and I was like, where are the people in house, she would make bacon and eggs but the bacon would never be like, crispy and I was like, I don’t understand why.
> -Laura, 30-year-old editor

Garcia argues that foods of many origins have been adopted as American cuisine, with their ethnicity becoming superficial (Garcia and Garcia 2009); for these Korean Americans, however, Korean foods were not something that they could celebrate. This was particularly true for those growing up in the 1970s, ‘80s, and even ‘90s, when Korean food was not widely known among non-Koreans.
Oh, you know what else about the food. I remember when I was younger like, some neighborhood kids came over and like, they looked in our fridge and they saw this huge jar of kimchi and they are like, God, how is that like, a brain or I don’t know they are like, why is this so disgusting. … They acted like it was disgusting. I remember up to the point I hadn’t thought about Korean food as being weird and different. …. I think I was very conscious of it then. ….  
-Laura, 30-year-old editor

The way Laura’s peers reacted to kimchi triggered her recognition of the cultural differences between her and other Americans. For her, consciousness of such cultural differences arose from the way other Americans, mostly her White peers, objectified her and her family. Although she assimilated into the American mainstream in terms of education and self-perception, she and her family--and the food they consumed--were perceived of as outside of that norm. This Western perception of the Otherness of Asian food becomes a pivotal moment for Korean Americans to realize that their culture differs from the mainstream, are racialized, and Otherized.

The reaction of the first generation to such microaggressions is often passive – just avoid and ignore it. Emily explains why her mother finally decided to eat Korean food only in private.

Eating food was definitely a big thing as well. My mom, she is a -- she always loved cooking things from scratch I think she studied that or majored in home economics or something. …. [Yet] it was kind of strange because my mom kept it (kimchi) hidden, sort of, so that when we did have guest over … yeah, kimchi was like, put to the side. She was very sensitive to how other people might perceive us or perceive our family. ….  
… She [my mother] made a kimbap [a seaweed roll made from steamed rice seasoned with vinegar, salt and sesame oil, various vegetables, and meat] for me once in elementary school and the kids made fun of me… They were like “Eww… what is that. That looks so gross…” And so after that my mom never packed me Korean food ever again. ….  
-Emily, a 23-year-old NYU graduate, working in communication
Although ethnic food remained “a sign of nostalgia for an imagined time of simple reciprocal exchange (Ray 2004:p81)” to be celebrated and practiced through family meals, Emily’s mother decided to keep that practice away from the Western eyes. Her decision was a reactionary strategy designed to mitigate the damages caused by a series of incidents her children had to confront; for many immigrant (and their children), safety requires assimilation to the mainstream -- and the more visible an immigrant’s ethnic ‘Otherness’, the more important such assimilation becomes. Yet as many immigrant parents find assimilation the safest course, they may be unable to offer useful advice to their American-born but racialized children when incidents happen, as they inevitably do. Jenny, 37-year-old 2.5 generation, said that she wished that her parents had come up with more thorough advice beyond ignoring when the white boy called her Ching Chong at a school party.

That was very upsetting and then I came home, I cried to my parents but my parents didn’t really give me any good advice, they just said you know don’t let it bother you but of course it bothered me. … instead of you know that’s right to tell them you’re not Ching Chong you’re Korean and do they know where Korea is and all of that stuff, right. It was just don’t let them bother you, don’t let that bother you just ignore it. So that was -- I was not happy with them about that.

-Jenny, a 37-year-old

“Racial categories reflect the externally imposed designations or assignments of dominant groups upon others (Kibria 1998:p940).” Therefore, due to being racialized and Otherized, and the frequent necessity of strategically limiting ethnic culture to the private realm, ethnicity for Korean Americans is an unavoidable issue (Waters 1990). At the same time, despite the limits and restrictions of cultural expression, racial and ethnic identities are deliberately and rigorously shaped by the racialized group (Cornell and Hartmann 1998; Kibria 1998). The
common experience of aggressions both systemic and micro-, while challenging and changing individuals’ sense of self, pushes Koreans Americans to actively—and often collectively—seek ways to establish themselves. They often find friendship with people of similar cultural background, upbringing, and values; this enables Korean Americans to bond together and feel secure among Korean Americans and other Asian Americans (Tuan 1999; Pyke and Dang 2003), as Emily explains:

I actually really began to feel it, maybe towards the end of high school when I completely sort of shut myself off from my school friends. So I slowly began to lose a lot of my high school friends because I had just started to focus all my efforts on my church friends [Korean Americans], because I felt like those are the people that truly understood where I came from and could understand my background.

-Emily, a 23-year-old NYU graduate, working in communication

As shown in my interviews, most of my Korean American informants claim that their close friends are either Korean Americans (not Korean nationals) or other Asian Americans. Few have close relationships with Korean nationals or recent immigrants. Furthermore, while some seek out pan-Asian solidarity by identifying themselves as Asian Americans broadly (Tuan 1999), many develop an explicitly Korean American identity.

This process often happens during college. Many Asian Americans grew up without discussing their ethnic history, as their immigrant parents worked long hours and emphasized assimilation, although many of them underscored to learn Korean culture and language. Those who learned Korean and heard about Korean culture frequently did so through Saturday schools at Korean churches rather than in the home. Yet during college, as recounted by Younghee at the beginning of this chapter, many Korean Americans search for formal paths towards learning
about themselves, their collective history, and cultural heritage. This can include taking classes in
the language, Korean studies, East Asian studies, ethnic studies and Asian American studies; and
participation in ethnic campus organizations, such as KSA, pan-Asian, students of color, and
religious organizations. Some develop their identity as Korean Americans, while others go
beyond the specific ethnic boundary to enhance their Asian American identity. Having
experienced a series of anti-Asian microaggressions and lacking useful advice from her parents,
Jenny honed her identity as a woman of color in general and an Asian American woman in
particular during her years at Barnard College in the 1990s.

Yeah I think my whole college experience and studying women’s studies and going to an
all-women’s college really brought that out for me. Identity politics and what it means to
be a woman, an Asian American woman, or a woman of color and all of that. .. So during
college I was part of an organization committee against anti-Asian violence.
-Jenny, 37-year-old 2.5 generation

Jenny developed her identity politics by participating in organizations led by women of color as a
young adult. In doing so, she found and nurtured a sense of racial affinity and commonality, not
only with Asian Americans of Korean descents, but with “other Asians”(Espiritu 1992; Espiritu
and Ong 1994; Kibria 1997).

While many Korean Americans define themselves as Asian Americans during college,
others have developed their identity more specifically as Korean Americans. A few interviewees,
like Grace, used words such as “a sense of Korean pride” or “being proud of being Korean” to
explain their Korean identity. Nick, a 21-year-old college student at New York University,
underscored his Koreanness in high school: “I developed a sense of Korean pride and started
Jay, whose parents aspired to full assimilation for their children, regrets not making an effort to know about Korean culture.

I think it had a lot to do with how I am. I don’t know, like I look back on it now, I’m 30 and I don’t know enough Korean to converse in Korean, I can’t talk to my patients in Korean. … A part of me kind of regrets not knowing. Now, I think about it and I wish I could have taken Korean classes and learn Korean and be more Korean. I’m not married to a Korean person but I want my [future] children to know Korean, I want my mom to spend time with them so they speak Korean. But it’s like one of those things when it gets more like regret.

-Jay, a 30-year-old surgeon

Growing up a young child of Korean immigrants in a predominantly White neighborhood in Houston, Jay did not initially make the choice to avoid learning the ethnic language. His adolescent identity crisis and “a period of time when I was very against Korean people” during college were reactions to his situation. He now practices Korean culture through traveling to New Jersey Koreatowns to grocery shop and eat Korean food, and sometimes spending time in Koreatown with his friends. Because he cannot speak Korean, he cannot teach the language to his children, although he hopes that they will grow up learning and speaking Korean; he is very aware that his distinctive ethnicity might diminish further, or even disappear, in his children’s generation (Alba 2004).

Jay was one of the last of my interviewees during fieldwork; I had a preconceived notion of him as potentially overly invested in assimilation, as the person who introduced us told me that Jay was ‘not very Korean’. Certainly, he had achieved the desired economic assimilation, as
his parents owned a small business and he had become a medical doctor; I thought he might be one of the Korean Americans who are reluctant to talk about their ethnic identity due to a strong desire to be considered just ‘American’. Indeed, during the interview, he often mentioned that he was Americanized and not Korean enough; yet at the same time, he talked openly about his lingering identity issues. Likewise, when I asked him why he wants his children to speak Korean or regrets not learning Korean himself, he was not able to clearly explain the reasons, although he was frank about why he tried to stay away from Korean community.

**Transnational activities**

As Ueda (2002) shows in his article on second generation Japanese Americans, new Asian Americans reconnect to their homeland through “consuming commodities of mass culture and commercial markets,” in addition to “their local cultural and racial boundaries, and to their construction of an ethnic American identity” (Ueda 2002: p34). Korean Americans are part of this pattern. Even those who broadly define themselves as Asian American emphasize their Koreanness to some degree; Jin-ah and Younghee, for example, engage with the motherland through Korean history and politics. A majority of Korean Americans, however, practice an “ethnic” identity based on food and pop culture on daily basis. I argue that the ethnic identity crises and insecurities they generally face as racialized minorities has led many Korean Americans to maintain transnational ties to the ancestral country through pop culture and consumption, or temporary return to Korea for work or travel.

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154 Ueda argues that this trend parallels the experience of Nisei in prewar Hawaii.
Korean Wave

Hallyu, the Korean Wave, has not yet broken into the U.S. mainstream. Yet, Korean popular culture, such as movies, dramas and pop music, were largely consumed by Korean immigrants and their children. Grace, a 23-year-old college graduate and huge fan of Korean pop culture, also began to watch Korean dramas with her mother in the 1990s.

Ever since I was younger, we always watched drama because my mom likes drama. My dad would always get mad and yell at us because we always watch drama. … I always listened to Korean music. Overall I think watched and listened to more Korean stuff rather than American stuff.

-Grace, a 23-year-old college graduate

Grace grew up in Flushing, where she was exposed to Korean culture from an early age. Although her parents were deeply engaged in Flushing’s Korean community through the Korean churches, sharing Korean pop culture became of way of not only transmitting culture from Korea, but also doing so cross-generationally. Grace regularly visited video rental shops for Korean dramas. Eventually, these cultural materials became easily accessible online (although often illegally) with subtitles, appearing within a few days after the shows and dramas were aired in South Korea; DirecTV began to air Korean programs in 2006 (KCCA 2013).

Tim, a 23 year-old-law school student who speaks Korean without a strong American accent, explains that his Korean was improved not only by his cousin’s tutelage, but also through the Korean comic books that he read avidly.

Yeah they made my older cousin … tutor me in Korean … when I was like about 10 or something. So like that is how I learned most of my Korean but I have read a lot of comic books so that is where I learned to read and write. ... I think from my younger sister I think there was a lot of Korean Americans like the way they learned the languages
through the pop culture through the dramas. …She understood everything and she spoke because of the drama. …
-Tim, a 23 year-old-law school student

For the younger generations, Korean pop culture has more easily penetrated daily life, mainly due to the internet. Resources to learn the heritage language used to be limited to Korean classes taught at Korean churches by older Koreans, who maintained old-fashioned Korean style pedagogy; many older interviewees found these classes boring, distracting them from learning. The younger groups are able to access the language through Korean pop culture; Grace learned fluent Korean through dramas, which exposed her to idioms and new words that she would not learn by conversing with her parents or older Korean immigrants.

Pop culture’s influence goes beyond language as well. Some Korean Americans used the term “Korean pride” during interviews; Nick spoke of “a sense of Korean pride” that he developed in high school by making more Korean friends and exposing himself to more Korean culture than he had in the past.

In middle school I had a lot of white kids [in New Jersey]. When I went to high school … there are a lot of more Koreans in the school so I developed a sense of Korean pride and started hanging out with Korean friends, learning Korean and listening to Korean music, watching shows.
-Nick, a 21 year-old-college student at NYU

Nick was born in Japan and lived in Korea before coming to the U.S. at five years old. He assimilated himself by “learning English, not learning Korean or anything,” and “forgot all Korean.” Surrounded by white peers, and with strong aspirations for Americanization, Nick was not able to communicate in Korean by middle school. Yet, as Nick explains, more frequent
contact with Korean peers, with relationships rooted in shared experiences as a racialized minority, eventually developed and reinforced his ethnic pride and transnational ties (Lew 2006).

Tim, a 23-year-old law school student, breakdances in New York City, where the style originated. Yet he recalls that having known a Korean b-boy changed “my [his] life in breakdancing.” B-boy style was introduced to Korea by American GIs right after its genesis in the 1980s, but it was not a major part of the scene until the late 1990s; eventually, Korean teams started to win major international competitions.¹⁵⁵ Tim met a Korean break dancer who was visiting New York and showed him around the city. As their friendship developed, Tim became even more immersed in Korean pop culture.

This guy I met was like just as good as any of these big name guys. He treated me like an equal [unlike other superstar b-boys]. I wanted to practice I am horrible and he is like that is fine that is great. He was very interested in becoming my friend. … He taught me so much. I thought all Koreans are like it’s all about fame. Then for him and his group he was like we don’t care about winning we care about improving the creativity in our dance. And I think he taught me some Korean culture too like the whole idea of Jeong [caring for others] …

-Tim, a 23 year-old-law school student

This friendship was extended to other Korean b-boys; Tim visited them in Korea to learn breakdancing. “Just a month I actually wanted to do one of those English teaching jobs. I took a year off before school but that too, the main issue was that I wanted to go there.” Although he had been to Korea several times before, this trip meant something different to him. It was not a

¹⁵⁵ For example, the Battle of the Year is one of the most well-known b-boying competition; South Korea’s Visual Shock, was firstly placed on the third in 2001; in 2002, Expression Crew won the final. Since 2002, Korean teams went to the final competition almost every year, except 2011 and 2012, and won the title 7 times.
family trip, limiting the experience within family networks; it was a journey of self-discovery, of cultural roots and identity as a young adult.

I don’t belong in Korea

Immigrants often engage in transnational activities in their homeland by participating in religious, social and political aspects, e.g. voting, investment, and social and cultural remittances (Levitt 2001; Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 2005); and children of these immigrants are also active participants of the transnational activities, particularly through family connections (Levitt 2002; Smith 2006). As transnational studies focusing on Asian Americans suggest, studying and traveling in their homelands gives second generation Asian Americans an opportunity to experience transnational identification (Kibria 2002; Ueda 2002); my study also shows that transnational engagements by Korean Americans are not only religious, social and political, but also cultural. As Kibria argues, “the experience of homeland trips provided an important forum, a thematic focal point for reflection and discussion of their relationship to Chinese or Korean societies and more generally, the meaning of membership and belonging in the Chinese or Korean collective. (Kibria 2002: p297)”

Laura had been to Korea with her family when she was younger, yet wanted to have different experience without her relatives; she went to Seoul for a five-week summer camp during her junior year in 2003 and remembers the feeling:

And I was like this is what it feels like to be white in America like everyone looks like you. … And that was very great and it was the first time that I had really felt like wow … this is sort of a place where I am from.
-Laura, a 30-year-old editor
This moment reconnected Laura to the motherland as part of her identity; she came back to Korea after graduating college and stayed about three years. Homeland trips, moreover, are often moments to confirm the rupture of images of Korea between generations. A Korean American’s parents might retain the image of Korea as a less developed country, a poor nation stuck in the time they left Korea.\textsuperscript{156} Rather, what transnational visitor witness is a modernized and technologically advanced country.

Amy, a 32-year-old graduate student

Amy, who had been to Korea several times, first saw Korea as a fun, modernized and fashionable country during her visit in 2005. This re-imagining led her to consume more cultural products after coming back to the U.S., and she began to study Korean to understand the culture more.

Yet connection to roots is often rooted in illusion, imagination and nostalgia that they have never experienced. Emily says “[being] in Korea which gives us the illusion of connecting to our roots.”

\textsuperscript{156} As seen in the previous chapter on Korean nationals, many Korean nationals often complain that Korean immigrants who left Korea in the 1970s and ‘80s are too old-fashioned in remembering Korea of being an underdeveloped country. Yet these Korean nationals, who are urban middle or upper-middle classes, would also argue that they are more globalized and cosmopolitan than these immigrants in general.
So they were saying obviously we looked different … So he was saying well in Korean where are you from and then someone from our group said we’re Koreans from the US and he said oh welcome back. So that was kind of nice yeah to hear that, yeah. … I think I was really intimidated before I went. … Part of is you know not speaking Korean, not having growing up really in the culture of a Korean household. So I think having gone to Korea that’s what made me be more comfortable with joining Nodutdol and being around more Koreans and Korean-Americans, yeah.

-Jenny, a 37 year-old director at the non-profit health organization

As noted earlier, Jenny did not necessarily associate herself with Koreans or Korean Americans, but more broadly as an Asian American woman. However, her trip to Korea was a critical moment for Jenny, who no longer had family to connect herself to Korea. She went to Korea with other Korean Americans as a group trip, organized by a Korean American grassroots organization based in New York, and met many progressive activists in Korea. One of the activists said to the group, “welcome back,” a statement that has stuck for Jenny; she finally felt that she was partially embraced as a Korean.

Yet most of Korean Americans, including Jenny, also reaffirm that they are different from “ordinary Koreans.” Laura, who stayed in Korea for three years, explains her identity crisis in Korea due to realizing that she was not fully embraced by Korean society.

I was having like identity crisis issues the whole time I was in Korea because like Koreans didn’t really accept me as Korean you know. And then Americans didn’t really accept me as American and I was really frustrated. Actually by the time I left I was like well if they are not going to call me Korean then I am not going to call myself Korean you know kind of thing. ….. I was actually uncomfortable the whole time I worked there [at the research institution] because I didn’t know how to interact with people and I didn’t want to offend people and then I just didn’t know how I was supposed to talk to this person or that person you know.

-Laura, a 30-year-old editor
According to a survey (sample = 800) conducted by the Overseas Korean Foundation (OKF) in 2013, Korean nationals consider Korean Americans as belonging to the Korean nation more than any other overseas Korean group; the data also indicates that Korean Americans are the most favorable overseas Koreans in general (Overseas Korean Foundation 2013). Yet for Laura, who was not fluent in Korean when she lived there, her years there also confirmed her in-betweenness in both societies; she was not accepted as an American, but at the same time not embraced by Korea. As Stuart Hall puts it, diaspora is “people who belong to more than one world, speak more than one language and inhabit more than one identity, have more than one home, who have learned to negotiate and translate between two cultures” (1995:206). Yet as Grace stated, “I waited so long to go back I guess I had a high expectation;” the process of negotiation between two cultures does not always meet the imagined expectations.

Ethnic Identity and Consumption in Koreatown

Alex is a 26-year-old director of a non-profit organization born in South Korea but adopted by a white family when she was 6 months old; she grew up in a suburban neighborhood in upstate New York, and while her adoptive parents tried to maintain her ties to Korea by sending her to adoptee camps and participating in Korean parades, her cultural practices were limited to symbolic practices within the U.S.

It [Koreatown]’s a special place in my heart because when I was nine or ten well, however old I was it was large to me. I had never seen so many Koreans or – Korean businesses, restaurants, we would always, you know, go to Koryo Bookstore and afterwards eat lunch at M restaurant, after the parade… but the experience remembering is make it meaningful.
Alex, 26-year-old director at a non-profit organization

As a young child, Alex’s connections to her “imagined community” were abstracted from her daily life because she grew up in a white family (Kim 2003). Yet she was able to connect herself to her motherland by occasionally visiting Koreatown. For Alex, Korea, where she had not been since the adoption, was imagined and constructed through Koreatown, as she assumed it to resemble Korea.

There are various reasons why Korean Americans visit Koreatown in Manhattan. Food is a critical reason, as many grew up eating Korean food at home. However, in many cases, for younger Korean Americans living in New York City, Koreatown is a space where one can find open and explicit ethnic representation in juxtaposition to the white-dominant small towns or suburbs in which many Korean Americans grew up. This space offers a kind of comfort for Korean Americans, as it is a space where they can easily access comfort food. While Korean nationals, temporary residents of New York City, depict Koreatown as an “old, dingy, wack, and outdated” space greatly contrasted with “modern Korea,” Korean Americans interpret this space based on a racial/ethnic identity as a minority. Alex, a 26-year-old director at a non-profit organization, remembers that being in Koreatown and surrounded by Koreans as a young child allowed her to feel reconnected to her motherland. For many Korean Americans, Koreatown is a space where personal memory is anchored, racial insecurities disappear, and collective history is rediscovered; Korean Americans interpret this space based on an ethnic identity developed within the U.S. racial hierarchy and through negotiation with the motherland.

**Functional reasons**
Some Korean Americans spend time in Koreatown because of its convenient location in midtown Manhattan, where many go to school or work, to purchase particular ethnic products, either imported from Korea or produced in the U.S. by Korean [American] companies.

I started to go to Koreatown because it was convenient in a sense of being midway. Actually, I really like Koreatown, because it’s convenient. When I lived in Queens, there was less need to go to Koreatown, there are little delis and there are Korean people [in Queens]. ... And there are Korean restaurants there. ... Now I live on the Upper West Side, I always go to [Manhattan’s] Koreatown. .. It’s sort of a central space for people coming from different places.

-Laura, a 30-year-old editor

Like Laura, Allison, a 30-year-old special education teacher who grew up in Queens, did not go to Manhattan when she was a teenager except for yearly events, and instead regularly spent time in Flushing. She began to go to 32nd Street after college when she moved to Astoria; while she knew Flushing’s Koreatown better than the Manhattan Koreatown, the latter was closer -- and the 24/7/365 operation time was attractive as well. In the City that Never Sleeps, although nightlife is one of the main industries, ironically there are not many neighborhoods where you can easily get food at any time. That Koreatown rarely closes down reflects the nightlife in Seoul, making it a reliable place for gathering.

We were just in the area because we were in a rooftop bar elsewhere and I was like, oh, let’s go here because it’s 11:00/12:00 and other places are closing down but K-town is basically 24 hours. And so let’s go get drinks and continue.

-Jay, a 30-year-old surgeon

While it may be practiced in the private sphere—at home—some Korean Americans do not cook Korean food at home. Jin-ah identifies living apart from her parents as an important reason
she frequents Koreatown; “your mom always cooked Korean food for you, but you don’t live with your parents and you don’t cook Korean food. [Koreatown is] the place you can have Korean food as you had at home.” Likewise, Laura does not mind traveling to Koreatown from the Upper West Side to Midtown for food.

I find it hard to make Korean food here, like it’s so much easier in Korea … It’s so easy you just like put some spice in or like garlic and fry it up and it’s so good. And here I find it really hard to cook Korean food quickly. Korean food cooking here takes a lot of planning and you have to make sure you have Kimchi otherwise what’s the point and like all the stuff so, yeah.

-Laura, a 30-year-old editor

Various ethnic American groups have tried to maintain their ethnic identity by consuming ethnic cuisine in the home and at ethnic festivals (Douglas 1984; Holtzman 2006); however, many second generation Korean Americans must seek alternatives, especially once they go to college. Ben, a business student at New York University, writes about fine dining on his blog; yet the food he craved on his first day in New York City was Kalkuksoo, noodles in soup.

My parents came with me to drop off my stuff, and then they were like where do we go, I was like don’t worry I will take care of it, just leave, but then I called my friends but they were like we are having dinner with parents, so I had really bad burger and a burrito. So it was a first day eating experience, it was not very good. So then I had Sunbae [senior student] at NYU, and she was like do you want to have something, literally what I said was Kalguksoo [noodles] at Arirang. …. I had my first Manhattan Korean 32nd Street experience.

-Ben, a 20-year-old NYU student and food blogger

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157 As of 2012, Ben is now interning at the Union Square Hospitality Group, led by Danny Meyer -- a very rare opportunity for a second-year student.
Ben, who migrated to the U.S. at the age of seven, was nostalgic for the “comfort food,” that his grandmother cooked for him and that he ate on daily basis back in Seoul. Emily had a similarly nostalgic longing for Korean food in college, but her experience is more territorialized within the U.S.

We were all -- this is maybe like a month into college or two months into college and we’re all pretty home sick for Korean food because we all have dining plans. And so we’re always eating pasta, a lot of us grew up eating Korean food. So we just had that longing it for it and the more people we talked to the more people wanted to join because they all had the same feeling that’s why we went.

-Emily, a 23-year-old NYU graduate, working in communication

For both Ben and Emily, their memory of ethnic food primarily found in the home transferred to the commercial space of Koreatown. Memories of ethnic culture, particularly food, confirm cultural difference, both individually and collectively; In Koreatown, Korean Americans can negotiate their relationship with the past through food (Lupton 1994) and the present, through food, pop culture and entertainment, and confirm the presence of their ethnic culture citywide or even beyond.

Cultural representation in racialized America

The space itself retains meanings beyond that of a physical space, providing ethnic representation; that this is visible to other ethnic groups affirms the value of the people represented.

Yeah I think I was happy that there was at least one street dedicated to you know Koreans, for Koreans, yeah.
When Jenny revisited Koreatown as a college student, it represented a rare space devoted to Koreans. Koreanness was openly presented and accentuated, counteracting the racial inequality of normalized whiteness. Emily also echoes Jenny.

That’s where other people who are like me go to eat and interact. If you hang out there you can meet other people …who look like me.

-Emily, a 23-year-old NYU graduate, working in communication

Emily’s excitement at being around people “who look like me” is akin to how Laura initially experienced Korean society: “[like being] white in America.” Despite struggles due to cultural differences and language issues, or discrimination against Korean Americans in South Korea, Korean Americans’ status as a racial and ethnic minority is less intense, or even disappears, in Korea. So it does in Koreatown as well. Although there is an increasing number of non-Koreans visiting Koreatown due to the growing popularity of Korean food and pop culture, for some Korean Americans the space represents their culture and themselves despite its commercialism (Gans 1979; Halter 2007).

Interestingly, Younghee, a third generation Korean American, feels that some Korean Americans idealize a Korean college life that they have never had, and try to replicate it in the U.S. In the first year of college in Korea, students have many formal and informal meetings, the purpose of which is to develop a sense of community at school and enjoy freedom from the high school tradition of intense academic pressure; these meetings also enable senior students to introduce social issues and existing student movements to freshmen students and conscientize
them, a major part of college culture during the democratization processes of the 1980s and ‘90s. After such meetings, the students would inevitably have *dwipuri* (gathering) to close and recap the meetings, drinking *soju* or *makgolri* (Korean alcohol) on campus or at bars near campus; they sang movement songs and discussed social issues, ultimately giving a sense of belonging, community and collectivity. Like Korean college students in South Korea, some Korean Americans engage in *dwipuri* culture, yet do not necessarily participate in campus movements. Instead, they go to Koreatown.

There was an idea of what colleges are like in Korea, and you can sort of do that here, because New York is so much more Korean than where a lot of people grew up.

-Younghee, 34 year-old-graduate student

Most U.S.-born Korean Americans vaguely understand what Korean college life looks like; yet some Korean Americans romanticize aspect of Korean college life that they have never experienced. Younghee remembers that her Korean American peers tried to build a Korean community on campus at Columbia University through socializing events in the 1990s, yet most of the gatherings occurred in Koreatown.

I think a lot of kids, [Korean culture was something] you had at home, and there was no open public space. Koreatown was a kind of public space [for Koreans].

-Younghee, a 34 year-old-graduate student

Koreatown becomes a “public space” not in the sense of the traditional “democratic space,” but with the context of the city’s public spaces consistently commodified and privatized (Zukin 1995). In this process, deterritorialized Korean culture, moving between two nations and
between two cultural spheres, is commercialized and re-territorialized in a small section of a global city.

**My culture, embedded in my space**

Although many Korean American interviewees share experiences with cultural practice and ethnic identification through pop culture and consumption, their perceptions regarding ownership of Koreatown are very diverse. Korean nationals interpret Koreatown based entirely on their experiences as consumers and social identification as Korean citizens, and believe that “Others”—the immigrants and their children—have modified Korean culture to adapt to a new environment. Korean Americans’ understanding of the space is somewhat different, however; Koreatown reflects their personal history and the struggles their parents had to deal with in the U.S. The sense of *ownership* is more fraught. As Emily says:

> “My friends and I, when we would go out we’d be like, K-town, this is our town, we own this street and saying dumb stuff like that (laughs).”
> -Emily, a 23-year-old NYU graduate, working in communication

> “We own this street.” Emily did not grow up in New York, but five years ago she started regularly going to Koreatown with Korean-American friends while she was in college student at New York University. This short commercial strip soon became theirs. In fact, some Korean Americans have developed their own symbolic ownership of the street’s identity “in order to secure the neighborhood’s degree of distinction in the city” (Deener 2007: p293). In Korean Americans’ case, I refer symbolic ownership to their own understanding of spatial identity as a safe space, where their racial/ethnic distinction or insecurity in the larger society has diminished
and their sense of safety augmented. This space should be understood as rooted in the history of Korean immigration and their struggle in the U.S. racial order.

This process is what Duyvendak calls “the new ways of home-making” in the “caring community,” where Korean Americans find “their place among ‘normal’ people rather than being isolated in institutions” (Duyvendak 2011:p62). Clearly, it is a “comfortable space,” although they cannot clearly explain why; considering the question, Eren can’t be explicit on her motivations: “Why do I feel comfortable? I mean I don’t feel uncomfortable. I don’t know I am just so comfortable there. Maybe because I am familiar with it.” Likewise, Ben explains that Koreatown is a safe bet for him.

Eating a lot of South Asian food, like Thai food, it hits you, but Korean foods, you already know that. … But at Korean restaurants, you already know what you are gonna get it. I ate it past 20 years, so that’s why I mentioned it’s not entertainment. It’s plan B. Everything goes bad, let’s go to Ktown. It’s a safe house.

-Ben, 21-year-old college student and food blogger

For Ben, who is passionate about food and even saves money for fine dining, Koreatown is “plan B” because he knows the food as part of his daily life, and the space is now more familiar to him than other neighborhoods. Others, despite expressing emotional attachment, do not realize that they construct the space based on collective ethnic identification. Although Sunmee, a 42-year-old building manager who grew up in Brooklyn, does not think that she owns the space, her interpretation parallels Emily’s “my street”.

I do feel more comfortable on 32nd Street because I grew up there in a way. I mean, I’ve seen it over the years as something I know very well. ..I see the changes. Yes, definitely over 30 years I’ve seen the change and I feel comfortable with it. And in a sense I feel
like it grew as I grew...I don’t know. Koreatown is just Koreatown I never really felt – I don’t feel like I own it, I just feel like I know it and it’s always there. ...Like Chinatown is also comfortable but I don’t feel like it’s mine – Koreatown is like mine.

-Sunmee, a 42-year-old building manager

Sunmee, whose parents were greengrocers in Brooklyn in the 1970s, recalls being taken with her siblings to Koreatown on special occasions. She remembers taking a photo of 32nd Street in the early 1980s on the roof of the welfare hotel, where one of her best friends from junior high school used to live. She used to eat in Koreatown with her friends in her 20s, but had coffee or drinks in the Village; Koreatown was for visits or immigrants, not for younger Korean Americans hanging out. Although she does not believe that she has an ownership of the space, she uses a word “mine” in comparing Koreatown to Chinatown; while the latter is also a comfortable space for her, she felt that Koreatown is hers, a part of her life. Eren also uses the word “ours” describing Koreatown compared to other ethnic enclaves such as Chinatown.

I don’t remember thinking about that, I was thinking that ours was 32nd street and there were other places near K-town.

-Eren, a 30-year-old elementary school teacher

Eren grew up in North Carolina and came to New York to work; although she does not necessarily believe that she enjoys Koreatown, she still claims it for herself and other Koreans. During the interview, I intentionally mentioned how Korean nationals describe Koreatown as a dirty and dingy space; although her reaction were not verbal, I observed from her facial expression--and a certain amount of speechlessness--that she was offended and frustrated, due to emotional and symbolic connections to the space and her complicating feelings towards the motherland.
Most of the Korean American interviewees say that they hang out in Koreatown with other Korean Americans – someone “who looks like you,” and “who shares your culture.”

I think I went to eat lunch again with one of my classmates [at NYU Stern] that I just met...Yes, Korean-American. So we instantly connected. So we went to one of the restaurants there... I think when I first moved to New York I went every week because I missed Korean food, I just couldn’t get used to the dining hall food.

-Sara, a 23-year-old NYU graduate working in marketing in New York City

Yet their understanding of Koreatown still is equivocal and ambivalent; obviously Koreatown is not perfect. When I met Korean Americans while teaching at colleges and non-profit organizations, or interviewing them during my fieldwork, they often complained about how judgmental Korean society and Koreans are, particularly when it comes to physical appearance; they often had relatives comment on their appearance and figure, even advising plastic surgery. In this sense, Koreatown can resemble Korean society:

I do [have emotional attachment in Koreatown] because when I go to K-Town I think about my freshman year and how much they comforted me ... But at the same time I feel uncomfortable down that street... I think because I feel like more than anywhere in New York City, I’m being judged. There’s just this certain thing about K-town, like, I’d go there and obviously I’ll know some people there or maybe there are people who know me but don’t know them. And so there’s just this certain discomfort that I feel when I walk down that street. It’s not like me walking down here, don’t have to worry about that or even think about it but I think unconsciously I do worry... Yeah, I mean that has something to do with it too. It’s like a little piece of Korea, that’s what I think of when I walk down K-Town.

-Sara, a 23-year-old NYU graduate and working in marketing in New York City

Sara believes that Koreatown is a small part of Korea, physically and psychologically. Physically, it reflects Seoul’s busy consumption-centric neighborhoods, although Korean nationals would not agree with them; psychologically, the space itself exerts pressure, over the
possibility of being judged harshly. Tim has a similar opinion, but extends it to Korean Americans.

Even now every time I go, I feel a little foreign I guess. I don’t know I guess I just don’t feel totally comfortable. .. I don’t know I think because like once again it’s my stereotypes but like when you go there, it’s like Koreans you see, ... Even Korean American now, there are lot of Korean Americans who look like FOBs now... I don’t think they do that but the way they dress and do their hair is very similar it’s like how a lot of FOBs dress though FOBs dress a little flashier.¹⁵⁸ .... I am like I just can’t associate myself with that.. They are trying to copy k-pop culture.

-Tim, a 23-year-old Law School student and NYU graduate

Tim understands Koreatown by connecting it to Korean pop culture. Although he has been influenced by Korean pop culture, particularly break-dancing, and been to Korea several times, he did not want to associate himself to Koreans and Korean Americans who simply try to mimic pop stars; he also harshly criticizes Korean society’s emphasis on physical appearance. Even the Korean national Eunji, a 34-year-old illustrator, told me that she tended to dress up when she visited Koreatown, lest she meet someone she knew while slovenly dressed.

Negative judgment can also arise from the language barrier. This sometimes happens when they speak Korean with staff at Korean stores on 32nd Street, but the response is in English.

¹⁵⁸ Korean nationals and Korean Americans often think that their make-up and fashion styles are very different; it often was mentioned at several interviews. In the article, “Global make-up style to become a beauty from the East”, Elle Korea, a fashion magazine, introduced Asian make-up rules in the U.S. particularly in California. The journalist shared her story that she had a game for fun with her colleges, to figure out East Asian women’s nationalities by looking at their make-up and fashion styles during the overseas business trip; yet they found “the third race,” not falling into any categories of Korean, Japanese and Chinese styles, who had “tanned skin, thin eyebrows, and black straight hair, parted in the middle.” That was Korean Americans, particularly living in California. This article also argues that this style is a result of embracing ‘Asian women style that western males fantasize,” like Mulan and Pocahontas (Elle Korea, 2008 October). Yet at the same time, as seen in my interviews, Korean Americans think that Korean nationals too much concern about their physical appearance, rather than to show natural looks.
Koreatown has this like symbolism kind of for me right but at the same time it’s also very inaccessible for me...There is I think a level of like vulnerability too that you experience because and I mean immediately like they are switching to English and they are like what do you want and they are almost like annoyed as if like ... Why didn’t you speak Korean, or, you are that poor adopted child, as opposed to, like, white people walk into, like, Koreatown and just order and them not thinking, like, a day about it.

-Alex, 26-year-old director at a non-profit organization

Alex is a Korean adoptee who has tried to reconnect herself to Korea by celebrating her ethnic identity in Koreatown; yet even then she often feel that she is not embraced by other Koreans. This again parallels what Korean Americans have to confront not just in Koreatown but also in South Korea, in terms of what it means to be “Korean.” The Korean language, like English, becomes another marker of foreignness for Asian Americans (Kibra 2000) depending on which culture they’re engaging in, which leads feelings of inauthenticity and being shunned.

**Nation Branding: Introducing “their culture” to non-Koreans from below**

If we understand “the nation” as “an imagined community,” Korean Americans, like Korean nationals, also participate in nation branding projects from the below, as consumers in Koreatown as well as “public ambassadors” who introduce Koreanness to non-Koreans. Koreatown seems to be only public (albeit privatized and monetized) space for Korean Americans to introduce “their own culture” to their non-Korean associates.

I was like “Let’s go to Korea town”. … She [her non-Korean friend] was like “does everybody know that Korean food is so good, it’s delicious.”… And I took my colleagues to *Kunjip* [a restaurant in Koreatown], and everybody loved it.

-Laura, a 30-year-old editor
Particularly in North American and European cities where omnivorousness meets cosmopolitanism (Warde 2000), cultural trends have moved from snobbishness to openness and omnivorousness in the service of wide experience (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996; Warde, Martens and Olsen 1999). Korean cuisine has slowly penetrated American tables, particularly in New York City and Los Angeles, where Koreans are concentrated.

Yeah, I have and it’s so much fun doing that, getting them – [kimchi] and everything...Because Korean food is so different and Korea culture is so different so I like to introduce people to it. And seeing them actually like the food makes me happy... ... I think it’s both ways, a lot of people, especially in New York City people want to try different types of cuisines. Like I want to try Greek good, I think it’s the same for other non-Koreans who want to try Korean food if they haven’t tried it before. So I would just suggest for us to go.

-Sara, a 23-year-old NYU graduate and working in marketing in New York City

Korean Americans are now increasingly confident about their food, and thus can present it in their role as “a tour guide,” how Jin-ah describes introducing the culture to their non-Korean friends.

I see many KAs [Korean Americans] being like Korean tour guides to non-Koreans. Here in New York, if you know about food, you can be a tour guide!

-Jin-ah, a 32-year-old activist and artist

As Amy recalls, “now you see a group of white guys or African American families having Korean food, it’s getting more common” -- a state of affairs unimaginable while growing up in the 1980s and ‘90s. Among these Korean Americans, witnesses to a huge change in New York, some think that this trend bridges ethnic boundaries, while others feel a sense of ethnic (or national) pride as Koreans.
I feel happy, it gives me a lot of pride at being Korean and about non-Korean wanting to know about or enjoying Korean stuff, like culture-wise or food-wise. I like that. It gives me a lot of pride.

-Grace, a 23-year-old college graduate

Like Grace, Nick, who mentioned “Korean pride” several times during the interview, seems to be more confident about his culture.

Why? I don’t think it’s a matter of ‘why’ but we are a matter of ‘finally’, it’s getting like, more popular because it was meant to be. … Food tastes good to everybody, the movies are awesome, I feel that the food mostly that people link to our Korean culture. It tastes good, it’s healthy, and it’s tasty.

-Nick, a senior student at Stern, New York University

Nick, who developed his identity and a sense of Korean pride in high school, strongly believes that Korean food’s entrance into the U.S. mainstream is its due. As he witnesses a growing popularity of Korean culture, particularly culinary culture, the sense of ethnic/national pride is intensified. “Healthy and tasty Korean food,” intensively underscored in the globalization of Korean food projects by the Korean Food Foundation and other government agencies, is finally delivered by Korean Americans. In this process, Korean Americans becomes a part of an imagined community -- even as some Korean nationals would disagree with their authenticity.

For some, this growing popularity of ethnic cuisines eases racial/ethnic tensions. Emily, who cried while talking about her identity crisis, hopes that diverse groups can come together over shared enjoyment of culture.
I just wanted them to -- I guess I wanted them to -- yeah, I guess to introduce Korean culture and to -- even though I feel like food is a really good way to bridge boundaries and it brought us a little closer, that’s cheesy as that sounds.

-Emily, a 23-year-old NYU graduate, working in communication

For Emily, as individuals cross ethnic boundaries, those boundaries blur and finally shift (Alba and Nee 2003). In this, bridging boundaries is not a matter of flattening out distinctions through individual assimilation, but widespread, mutual recognition and celebration of diverse ethnic cultures.

Nonetheless, some Korean Americans feel that the socializing across ethnic boundaries is not all good; some Korean Americans say that the presence of non-Koreans, particularly white people, does not ameliorate racial or ethnic tension. Rather, they feel that “their space” is invaded. Sara is ambivalent about the presence of non-Koreans, which she connects to racial issues.

I think if I see a group of people honestly and it’s like a mixed group of Koreans and White people and whatever, then I’m like, oh, that looks really nice, they’re just having a good time altogether trying Korean food but if it’s just a group of [non-Koreans, particularly white]... And I’m like, oh, that’s kind of weird... Not in a restaurant but for instance at a club drinking, then I find it off because I know that their motive is... It’s like an Asian fetish and that really turns me off and that’s not cool... Yeah, so I’m very turned off by that.

-Sara, a 23-year-old NYU graduate and working in marketing in New York City

Sara’s interpretation of Koreatown is rooted in how she understands the U.S racial hierarchy. In most cases, Sara is happy to see her ethnic culture became widespread and recognized by New Yorkers, but as a racially politicized woman of color, Sara distrusts the presence of non-Asians in Koreatown. It is noteworthy that Sara invokes the “Asian fetish,” the
Western exotification, objectification, hypersexualization, and infantilization of Asian women’s bodies (Cho 1997; Kwan 1998). Sara’s understanding of white males at Koreatown’s bars reflects the frequent danger Asian women face from Orientalism in the Western gaze. For Sara, it might be partially an illusion of a strong belief in multicultural New York, as diversity is often mystified in a realm of consumerism, such as by eating in the ethnic restaurants or purchasing ethnic products (Jacoby 1994).

**Where is authenticity?**

Although Korean Americans claim their authenticity over their culture and their space, it is not always easy to define what “authentic Korean culture” means or to judge if Koreatown reflects what Korean culture means. As discussed at Chapter 5, Korean nationals find that Koreatown does not deliver authentic Korean culture, but that reproduced by immigrants stuck in time despite their travel back and forth between two nations and close work with Korean government agencies, as shown at Chapter 4. Yet for Korean Americans, the food is what they have eaten in their entire lives, whether they are modified or not in this new land. Koreatown thus offer authentic Korean food to various groups.

Yeah, so there was town girls, they were actually very interested in trying Korean food. And they suggested it to me... Yeah, it wasn’t me because I was kind of a little self-conscious and I wanted to just keep it separate but that was pretty good, that was a really fun time and Akish and Jake, the guy’s roommate, he was also really into Korean music. ... Pop culture or he was aware of it. And so it’s interesting because for non-Asians, to have knowledge about Asian pop culture signifies your intellectual level. And I think that’s what is becoming. ... Yeah. Because both Jake and Akish were -- they’re very smart and they were very into learning about different cultures, trying to experience the authenticity.

-Emily, a 23-year-old NYU graduate, working in communication
Emily believes that Koreatown offers authentic Korean food. When Emily found that her non-Korean friends, Akish and Jake, were intrigued by Korean pop culture and trying Korean food, she was glad that “authentic” Korean food is easily accessible in Koreatown, and that the culture finally caught non-Korean New Yorkers’ attention. For Korean Americans, the space grew up as they did, as Sunmee, a 42-year-old building manager, developed her emotional attachment to the space at a young age. Furthermore, the space itself has developed with the history of Korean immigration. In another words, the history of Koreatown is, in fact, equivalent to Koreans’ struggles as a racial/ethnic minority in New York and elsewhere, and their own stories. For Korean Americans, the Korean culture sold in Koreatown is authentic.

Those Korean Americans, whose understanding of Koreatown is based on their ethnic / cultural experiences in the U.S., do not necessarily have detailed information about the growing numbers of Korean corporations or compare the space to South Korea, unlike Korean nationals, whose judgment on the space is based on their consumption experience in South Korea, mostly in Seoul. When I briefly asked them about Korean franchise, many of them did not know that Paris Baguette and Tous Les Jours are the most popular bakery franchise in South Korea, or that Kyochon chicken was extremely popular in the mid-2000 but fading its popularity nowadays in Seoul.

However, this is not always the case for all Korean Americans; some even broadly question if ethnic consumption itself is a part of authentic Korean culture, while some later realize that Koreatown does not resonate with what Korea really looks like after they visit the country. Adam, a 22-year-old Political Science student at New York University, born in the U.S., but
raised up in Seoul and in England, and came back to the U.S. for college education, replies that he sees that some Korean Americans believe that visiting Koreatown is one of the engines that they engage in cultural practice, as he puts in “for them it’s more like engaging in something actively as something they want to like build up… Yea in “their” identity.” Adam takes issue with establishing one’s own identity in a commercial space. Adam believes that establishing one’s own identity in the marketplace might be an illusion. He believes that consuming Korean pop and consumer culture only reflects pseudo-ethnic or convenient, portable, intermittent, and symbolic consumer desire. His perspective is colored by his belief that he knows “the culture” because he grew up in Korea and the rest of his family including his parents reside in Korea. Yet other Korean Americans who do not have strong transnational ties to Korea through family and/or root their experience of ethnic authenticity in the marketplace delude themselves into believing in inauthentic cultural experiences.

As Appadurai (1996) argues, in this “ethnicscape,” “the homeland is partly invented, existing only in the imagination of the deterritorialized group and it can sometimes become so fantastic” (1996: p49). Yet in this process, Koreatown is likewise reimagined and reinvented as a space in which to “feel at home” or to have “nostalgia without memory” (Appadurai 1996: p30), where the nation and its culture are reterritorialized (Zukin 1995) in a local context.

Yet, the understanding of Koreatown also depends on the degree and levels of their transnational experiences. Korean Americans who have lived in Korea for several years often compare Koreatown to other consumption spaces, especially Seoul. Laura, who used to live in Hongdae, a hip neighborhood in Seoul, compares her own experience in Seoul to New York’s Koreatown. Her first experience of New York’s Koreatown goes back to 2005, when visiting
New York during the break, while working in Seoul. Having lived in Korea, she wanted to find a space in New York where she could have similar experiences, but she was disappointed with Koreatown.

Especially since I was living in Korea, I was sort of looking to find something similar. … I was more disappointed when I got food, because it’s obviously more expensive. … I was like, this is stupid. … Even after I moved [to New York], I still did not like Koreatown. It didn’t taste good, it’s twice as expensive [as food in Seoul]. …. Finally, my friends told me to shut up. This was the first big city I lived in since Seoul, and I was comparing everything. I was like “Korea is better”, so my friends were like “shut up”...

-Laura, a 30-year-old editor

Having lived in Seoul at two points in adulthood, she thinks about what authentic Korean food means rather than reverting to childhood memory associated with food. When I asked if she was only trying to remember the good aspects of Korea, she said, “There were stressful things in Korea, I do [tend to] remember the good stuff. I’m not trying to, but it keeps coming to me.” Although Laura talks about her identity crisis in Korea, she tries to remember positive things about Korea, e.g. public transit system and food. Despite the fact that visiting Koreatown is one of the ways that she recollects time in Korea, she was not entirely happy with the atmosphere, food and drinks that Koreatown deliver. Ben thinks that food in Koreatown cannot be authentic. As a food blogger who is interning in the restaurant industry, he believes that Korean food cannot be authentic in the U.S., but authenticity is being used as a marketing tool.

It’s not authentic, we’re not in Korea. How can you say it’s authentic if you’re not in Korea? …. I feel like authentic is overrated. People say that oh it tastes better but it’s authentic. I don’t care about authentic. I think about is it good? Does it taste better?

-Ben, a 20 year-old college student and food blogger
Likewise, Younghee finds that having lived in Korea made her able to distinguish between Korean food in different locations, and she began to compare Korean food in Korea, even in Flushing, in Boston and in New York.

Flushing is much better. Now then I lived in Korea, I don’t want to go to Korean restaurants anymore, because in Boston, Korean restaurants are really bad. Korean restaurants here [in New York] are much better, but I never knew the difference of taste [before she went to Korea], but after living in Korea for three years, I became so picky.

-Younghee, a 33-year-old graduate student

Korean Americans who have lived in Korea and consumed authentic Korean culture approach Koreatown in more concrete ways, such as by comparing prices and food quality in Koreatown and Seoul, just like my Korean-national interviewees. In this way, their perception of authentic Korean culture has evolved, rooted in their transnational connections to and consumption experience in the motherland.

**Korean Government Policies on Korean Americans and Koreatown**

In a globalized world, “settings where home is not only distant, but also where the very notion of home as a durably fixed place is in doubt” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: p11), the lives of Korean Americans remain highly localized within two nations. They practice transnationalism in diverse ways; homeland trips and relocation to South Korea, cultural practice through pop culture, entertainment and food, and spending time in a *transclave* as a space for a nostalgic home that they have never had, or as a space for hyper-ethnic consumption space -- what Emily calls it “a very weak version of Korea,” and Daniel “a very poor imitation of Korea.”
Although their cultural practices occur in transnational social fields (Levitt 2004), they do not necessarily interpret or recognize the policy influences on their activities or their broad participation in nation branding projects, e.g. introducing Korean pop culture, entertainment and food to others, as “public ambassadors.” In fact, for Korean government, Korean Americans, more economically successful than overseas Koreans in general whether they are the first generation or children of immigrants, are assets of the nation – great foreign investors as well as individuals that carry out the nation’s positive images (Aronczyk 2008) to non-Korean associates. Although many of them understand their transnational activities rooted in the U.S. racial order, as I have argued, and see it as one of the critical factors to lead their transnational connection, government policies and political economic changes between two nations greatly have enhanced on their transnational activities both in the U.S. and in South Korea.

Food should be differently interpreted in the U.S. context: changing food trend from snobbishness to omnivorousness in the U.S. and the growing popularity of ethnic foods, and the presence of Asian American star chefs, such as David Chang, Roy Choi, Hooni Kim, and Jungsik Yim. It should be noted that Hooni Kim closely worked with the Korean Food Foundation; The Kimchi Chronicles was likewise sponsored by South Korean government agencies (See Chapter 4). Indeed, Korean consumer culture sold in the U.S. is not necessarily ethnic culture developed by Korean immigrants and their children, but national culture, e.g. pop music, dramas, products and foods, particularly franchises, made in South Korea.

Some Korean Americans know that the growing popularity of Korean pop culture and food is related to South Korea’s political and economic power gain.
In the old days nobody knew what a Korean is, now everyone knows what a Korean is, they know food, Kimchi. Everyone assumed you’re either Chinese or Japanese now a lot of people know you’re Korean just without having to say anything. ..There is a huge exposure and I feel like Koreans are now becoming the Japanese, like a novelty item. … And a country that is – just like Japan when the economy in Japan rose, so did their appeal and their novelty in the ‘80s and I see the same thing happening in terms of Korea. Korea has become stronger economically and a power house, more people – like Samsung, LG is becoming more common and we become more of a novelty now just like the Japanese were in the ‘80s...Korean electronic and washing machine and so on, goods are just overwhelmingly……

-Sunmee, a 42-year-old building manager

Interestingly, when Sunmee explains why Korean culture is being exposed to non-Korean population, she uses “we” in reference to South Korea’s economic development and presence in the world economy. For her, it is a national pride, “Korean pride.” Yet despite the pride, as argued earlier, most Korean Americans are frustrated by Koreans and Korean society while in South Korea, because they often are treated as outsiders -- despite Korean Americans being the most embraced group among the Korean diaspora in terms of government policies and opinions by Korean nationals.

Conclusion
This chapter explores how U.S. racial dynamics and South Korea’s influences on the Korean community in New York City have enhanced Korean Americans’ transnational activities such as homeland trips, Korean pop culture consumption and visits to Koreatown. By developing and challenging previous literature on symbolic ethnicity, I argue that ethnic identification is not just anchored in one nation state. Rather, as my research shows, in the U.S. perspective, Korean
Americans should be interpreted as racial minority not entirely embraced by the U.S. mainstream, despite high levels of assimilation. The technical development and economic assimilation in the U.S. as well as South Korea’s financial crisis of 1997 coincidentally enabled Korean Americans to connect their motherland.

Symbolic ethnicity, developed by Gans and other assimilation theorists since 1979s, should be redefined and reconsidered by incorporating transnational flows of politics, economy and culture from a sending society. South Korea’s case tells a different story. In this process, Koreatown plays a critical role in many ways for Korean Americans. Koreatown is one of the few public spaces for enjoying what ethnic culture they grew up with privately. Unlike Korean nationals, whose perception is based on their understanding of the nation’s culture, Korean Americans, especially those who have not been to Korea, do not necessarily recognize the direct influence of South Korea in Koreatown; instead, they express emotional and symbolic connections to the space. In “[their] space”, they claim their “ethnic authenticity,” with racial insecurity fading away in the face of collective understanding of “[their] own culture and history” in the U.S. Where Korean nationals believe that the space is outdated, the space has existed and will exist as it has been and is by reflecting their collective struggles as an ethnic minority.

In this process, despite not always realizing the transnational influences of Korean government and corporations over the space, Korean Americans participate in nation branding projects, by developing a sense of “ourness” and “Korean pride,” and by introducing their culture to non-Korean associates. Yet Korean Americans sometimes have to confront inauthenticity and alienation, by constantly contemplating what a sense of collectivity and belonging means.
In Chapter 7, I turn my attention to non-Koreans, who while the least active participants in nation branding projects in Koreatown are the most desirable target consumers by transnational entrepreneurs in Koreatown. The chapter will incorporate two stories into reproducing Koreatown as a space for imagined Korean pop culture and cuisine. First, based on my interviews with non-Koreans in their 20s and 30s from diverse racial, ethnic and national backgrounds, I will navigate how and why the growing popularity of Korean pop culture in non-Korean communities, draws them to Koreatown as dedicated consumers in the context of Hallyu. Secondly, not only do I highlight dedicated Hallyu and Koreatown consumers, but also those New York consumers who are interested in ethnic foods in general but in Korean food in particular.
Chapter 7.

Media, food and popular culture: Koreatown for non-Koreans

“Anyone with a passion and palate for the exotic fare of the Far East would travel far to find a restaurant that fits the bill better than the recently opened Mi Cin at 130 West Forty-fifth Street. The cuisine is Korean.”
Craig Claiborne, July 11, 1960

“Pretty much any Korean you meet anywhere, you can take it for granted they like food, that they're passionate about food, particularly their food. Which of all the immigrant cuisines, has possibly been messed with the least. Unlike many other new arrivals, Koreans seem to have been the most unwilling to accommodate Western tastes. Maybe that's why it took us so much time to love the stuff.”
Anthony Bourdain, CNN's Parts Unknown, 2013

Korean food was introduced to the American public as early as the 1950s, even before the massive immigration from South Korea began. The New York Times article, “Food: Korean Dishes; There Are Many Specialties American Cook Can Adapt -- Two Recipes Offered,” ran on September 2, 1958, and the celebrated New York Times food critic Craig Claiborne, a Korean War veteran, introduced the Korean restaurant Mi Cin, considered the oldest Korean restaurant in the U.S. in “Food News: Exotic Fare Of Koreans” on July 11, 1960.159 Yet Korean food has taken a long time to cross racial/ethnic boundaries (Owen 1958).

A major shift came in the early- and mid-2000s, as Koreatown encouraged a new influx of non-Korean customers, particularly other Asians and Asian Americans, in response to the

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159 This was not, however, the first time the Times took note of Korean food. Two years before Claiborne's article, June Owen, a food news reporter for the women's page of The New York Times, wrote “Food: Korean Dishes: There Are Many Specialties American Cook Can Adapt -- Two Recipes,” published September 2nd of 1958.
financial crisis of 1997 and its impact on the shrinking consumption of Korean nationals, particularly international students. Koreatown now serves diverse groups spanning class, racial and ethnic backgrounds. In New York City, Korean food was just waiting to ‘be discovered’ by non-Asians, as Florence Fabricant wrote in the New York Times, on April 7, 1999 (Fabricant 1999). Sam Sifton, another New York Times food critic, was another pioneer in introducing the food of Koreatown to the American public, for instance in a December 8, 2009 review of Madangsui, a Korean restaurant on 35th Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway, in which he explained how to eat Korean BBQ ‘properly’ (Sifton 2009). In 2006, Anthony Bourdain, a chef and author, traveled to South Korea to shoot an episode of his popular show No Reservations, in which he introduced Korean food from street eats to live octopus to the American audience (June 12, 2006). He also traveled to L.A.’s Koreatown for the second episode of “Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown,” guided by two Korean Americans, Roy Choi and David Choe.

The National Restaurant Association ranked Korean food the second hottest ethnic food in its annual forecast (following Peruvian cuisine), based on an online survey of 1,283 members of the American Culinary Federation, in October-November 2013 (The National Restaurant Association 2013). During a 2014 conversation with Chelsea Clinton, the daughter of former President Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton, Jimmy Fallon, the host of NBC’s Tonight Show, asked her about life in New York City. In the segment “Chelsea Clinton is a regular New Yorker,” Fallon recalled their earlier conversation about the Korean restaurant Kum Gang San; he mentioned having taken up Clinton's suggestion to eat there. Korean food’s inclusion in Clinton and Fallon's “regular New Yorker” lifestyle, despite its slow adoption, reflects the penetration of Korean food into the U.S. mainstream.
2014 was indeed a big year for Korean food in New York City. Korean food has become more popular than ever before. Joy Manning from Zagat magazine followed Sifton's example in “You’re Eating It Wrong: Korean BBQ,” providing Korean BBQ 101 with Matt Rodbard from Food Republic to “demystify the rituals and rules of the Korean BBQ joint” (Manning 2014). The New York Times food critic Pete Wells mapped Korean restaurants in Queens, with “In Queens, Kimchi Is Just the Start” (December 16, 2014) (Wells 2014). Rodbard, the author of Koreatowns, USA, noted, “it was not long ago when Korean food in America was nothing more than a curiosity (at best) and a cliché (at worst),” but “it became clear that Korean food had a very big 2014 — making serious strides to “catch up” with better-known Asian cuisines like Japanese, Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese foods” (Rodbard 2014). The new trend in Manhattan’s Koreatown is the embrace and targeting of more non-Koreans; as one Korean entrepreneur stated during an interview, Koreatown cannot survive without non-Korean customers.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to non-Koreans, who, while the least active participants in nation branding projects in Koreatown are the most desirable target consumers for transnational entrepreneurs in Koreatown, and for the purposes of the Korean government in promoting South Korea. First, I examine the new trendiness of Korean food in New York City, highlighting the increasing number of non-Korean foodies who, while interested in ethnic foods in general, are particularly focused on Korean food. I will place the growing popularity of Korean food in the context of a move from snobbishness to omnivorousness; and of Koreatown as a pivotal space where the ethnic revival meets consumerism, as part of marketing ethnicity in New York City. Second, I will navigate how and why the growing popularity of Korean pop culture in non-Korean communities, mostly Asian and Latin American communities, draws them
to Koreatown in the context of *Hallyu*. Based on the New York context, I argue that Korean pop culture is becoming a tool with which non-Koreans cross cultural boundaries and imagine a new culture. In this process, the media plays an important role, intriguing non-Korean consumers to visit Koreatown. I pay particular attention to how new media (e.g. Youtube, Yelp, online groups and Facebook) has introduced new cultural and food trends to non-Koreans in the U.S, and further shaped and created the landscape of Koreatown as multi-ethnic consumer-scape.

This chapter is based on 31 interviews conducted in New York City with non-Koreans, most of who resided in New York City at the time of interviews, and participant observations from teaching Korean classes and participating in cultural events. One interview, with a white man born and raised on Long Island, was conducted in Seoul during my international fieldwork; two interviews with white women, twins who participated in a South Korean national broadcasting system documentary about Manhattan’s Koreatown, were conducted through emails due to their location. These three interviewees were very active interpreters of Korean culture online: the white man had become an internet star after publicizing several music videos about Korea, including a Seoul subway song on YouTube in 2011; the twins posted their video about the Koreatown experience, Korean cosmetics and other cultural things on YouTube.

Of these 31 interviewees, 19 were U.S. citizens by birth, while 12 were born outside the U.S. Of the latter, four are naturalized citizens who immigrated with their parents; the other eight participants came to New York City as international students, although some currently have jobs with permanent residency. The non-Korean interviewees are racially diverse: 12 non-Korean Asians; nine Hispanics; seven White people; and three Black people.
Some had become interested in Korean pop culture first, which led to interest in Korean food and Koreatown; others enjoy dining on Korean food in Koreatown without engaging in other aspects of Korean culture. Only five had traveled Korea; two lived and worked in South Korea as expats at the time of the interviews, while most expressed the wish to visit Korea in the near future.

Two stories of Koreatown

First Narrative: *Hallyu* and Koreatown

One sunny day in the fall of 2009, Aria felt unhappy and depressed. A Dominican American and native New Yorker, Aria—who was 18 at the time—was standing in front of the JYP Entertainment—one of the biggest music labels in South Korea--building on 31st Street near Koreatown. She was waiting to meet up with people she conversed with as part of an online group; they were there to protest against the company’s decision to expel Jay Park (Jaebom Park), a Korean American rapper and b-boy, from the Korean boy band 2PM.

Among the people Aria was waiting for was Taylor, an African American woman who was then a 22-year-old college student. A few weeks previously, Aria and Taylor met at the 27th Korean Harvest & Folklore Festival at Citi Field, Queens. Aria was singing all the songs at the

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160 The first story was reconstructed by the author based on in-depth interviews with Aria and Taylor.

161 Jay Park, a third generation Korean American born and raised in Seattle, came to Korea as a teenager to work in music industry as a trainee of JYP Entertainment in 2005. He made his debut as the leader of the boy band 2PM, and was very successful. Scandal arose in 2009, when some netizens found out that in 2005 Park had written on his MySpace page, that “Korea is gay” and “I don't like Koreans” and “I want to go back to the U.S.” The company quickly decided to expel him from the band due to the resulting controversy, although that led to several fan protests around the world.
festival with a friend; they began to talk to other girls interested in K-pop, including Taylor – who said it was “love at first sight, and [ ] never separated after that.” Taylor was also upset about the company’s decision; as protests were held worldwide from Seoul to Thailand, *Hallyu* fans in New York City held online discussions and decided to hold their own protests in front of JYP’s New York branch.

I was a fan. And I loved them [2PM] together. And when we found out that happened we were so upset. It was remarkable to see this because people were doing protests all over not even just in Korea; in Thailand, in Australia. In countries you’ve never even heard of. It was insane and we were all keeping this together. Somebody made a 2PM forum and everybody was added and we’d keep in contact with everyone and that’s when everybody started making flash mobs in all these different countries at 2PM. It was crazy.

- Taylor, a 25-year-old working in marketing, African American

Taylor, Aria, and others from the online group protested by putting posters all over the windows of the label’s building. Although Taylor notes that the protestors were upset about the company's actions, she was young and enthusiastic and thought that their plan was fun and interesting. Furthermore, as with Taylor and Aria, many of the participants felt instantly connected to each other.

Yeah. I think we connected right away with that, a lot of us connected right away. Again, we were hanging out with people that were just like us. Most of the people there too were of other backgrounds. So we bonded a lot.

- Taylor, a 25-year-old working in marketing, African American

Indeed, after these protests died down, “it really became about us [Taylor, Aria, and others] bonding and finding other people who like the same things we do.” They developed a sense of
community by attending these voluntary protests and extended it to build their own community, one in which, as Taylor put it, no one would be the “weirdo.”

These on-going protests brought them to Koreatown. Aria recalls that her fellow protesters told her about Koreatown.

It was with a whole bunch of friends and they were just like, “Do you know about Koreatown? And I was like, “Is there Koreatown, I didn’t even know that?” So we went down and I just saw this block, it was so tiny.

-Aria, a 21-year-old college student, Dominican American

Although a native New Yorker, Aria had never heard of Koreatown before engaging in the protests. After the protest was over, Aria, Taylor, and their other friends had Korean food at the inexpensive Korean buffet-deli style restaurant Woorijip. Soon it became a regular thing for them to meet up for the protest in front of the JYP building and then go to Koreatown for Korean food; as Taylor recalls, “we would go there like every day except for the weekends.” Although Aria thought that Koreatown was too small to be a 'town', she had fun exploring things that she had previously only seen through the media. Indeed, for Aria, Taylor, and others, Korea and its culture were initially primarily imagined through the media; they later realized it in Koreatown, a physical gateway to immersing themselves into Korean pop culture. Their financial challenges as young high school and college students, not necessarily from well-off families, might have limited their experience in Koreatown – known for its relative priceyness – yet they saw themselves as dedicated consumers, talking with and getting to know Koreatown workers.
The Second Story: The Growing Popularity of Korean Food in New York City

On the first day of August in 2015, I was wandering around the Union Square greenmarket. It was a Saturday, and the greenmarket was packed with shoppers and tourists. I was looking for a Korean woman, the YouTube star Maangchi, who was holding a book signing at a booth that day. Her new book was published May 2015 and was a success -- as of September 7th, *Maangchi’s Real Korean Cooking: Authentic Dishes for the Home Cook* ranks #4 in Asian cooking and #19 in regional and international cooking on Amazon, with 4.8 stars. Her book was selected as Yahoo Food’s Cookbook of the Week (Prisco 2015). Maangchi has been featured in the New York Times, New York Daily News, Chicago Tribune, Yahoo, USA Today, and many others, including Korean media both in the U.S. and in Korea. She has been described as Korean food ambassador (Suk 2015), while her website was praised as one of the nation’s most useful websites, to “discover online gateways to intriguing aspects of Korea” among Korean visitors (Lee and Moon 2011). Maangchi, who lives in New York City, is “YouTube’s Korean Julia Child,” with more than 619,000 YouTube subscribers (even more than Martha Stewart); she has a revenue-sharing partnership with Youtube (Moskin 2015) and was one of 25 winners of Next Up, which aims at discovering and promoting “the growth of the next big YouTube stars according to an official YouTube blog (Walker 2012).

When I finally found her booth around noon, three female staff members, either white or Asian, were greeting visitors; Maangchi, in her 50s, seemed very friendly and easy-going. The event was organized by Food Book Fair based in Brooklyn, New York; Maangchi’s book signing event was one of several they had set up at the Union Square Greenmarket for chefs and cook book authors. With Maangchi’s permission, between 12 and 1 that afternoon I stood beside her
booth and observed her event. Although I did not directly talk to guests, I often offered to take photos for them together if they wanted.

**Figure 34. Maangchi’s Greenmarket Book Signing**

*Photo by the author*

“Oh my god, I am a huge fan of yours.” A white woman in her early 20s told her was holding her book for Maangchi to sign, her voice quivering slightly with excitement. “Wow, look at your book,” Maangchi responded — it was affixed with colorful index papers and notes. It seemed that the woman not only cooks Korean food but also studies the recipes. “I made Kimchi at home,” she proudly told Maangchi. Most of the 28 visitors came to meet Maangchi, excepting a few who dropped by the event without information. Their backgrounds were very diverse, from
Asians to White to Latinos; although most of them currently reside in New York City, one girl was visiting New York from New Orleans. Many were non-Koreans who follow her Youtube channel; they enthusiastically shared photos of their homemade Korean foods and culinary experiences, and consulted her for cooking advice.

Like these guests at the event, many of Maangchi’s YouTube followers and her website subscribers are active to reach out and communicate with Maangchi, by sending photos of their own homemade Korean food and asking questions about recipes to Maangchi. Maangchi was not a traditional information provider who passes on her knowledge and sends unidirectional messages to her audience. Rather, her audience, whether in virtual worlds, e.g. her website and YouTube channel, or in their face-to-face interactions, recreate a new platform to establish participatory, user-centered and collaborative culture (van Dijck 2013:10).

Maangchi’s own mission, introduced during her interview with Yahoo, is “translating and demystifying traditional dishes with pictures, definitions, and easy-to-follow supermarket guides for shopping (Prisco 2015).” As a result, like Aria and Taylor, whose interests in Korea was shaped by new media, at some point this audience engages with Korean food and Korean culture beyond the online communities. Many shop for Korean ingredients at online stores (operated by Hmart and H&Y Marketplace) or even on Amazon. Korean food lovers in New York City have more options for accessing Korean foods and consumer culture. More recently, their options have expanded beyond Koreatown, as Korean restaurants or delis open across the city.
Two waves in Koreatown

These stories show how Korean culture and food are diffused in online communities, ultimately luring people who have virtually explored Korean culture to practice it in a dedicated physical space in New York City, in turn making Koreatown’s consumer landscape more multiethnic and diverse. I identify two waves among non-Korean consumers in Koreatown: the first wave started with Hallyu in the Asian/Asian American community and has expanded to others since the early 2000s; the second is more recent—dating from 2010—and involves trends in New York’s ethnic foodscape. These stories are often reframed and reshaped by the development of new media and technology, and by new cultural trends within the U.S., as Youtube and Yelp reviews are powerful knowledge producers.

The rise of Koreatown as a hip transclave in which to hang out is rooted in the popularity of Korean popular culture and/or food among younger generations. My interviewees identified several factors leading these consumers to delve into the culture and food in Koreatown. As previous literature focusing on other Asian countries suggests, this popularity is built on 1) new media, where YouTube and other free websites on which (subtitled) Korean dramas and movies are accessible, and 2) the transnational flows of hybrid Korean culture. However, previous literature has paid less attention to institutional, socio-economic and cultural changes in receiving societies. This chapter, thus, recognizes three additional factors are based on urban and social changes in New York City: 1) the commercialization of ethnic culture; 2) the omnivore trend and popularity of ethnic food; and 3) the popularization of some racial/ethnic cultures and subsequent emergence of Hallyu fans.
The first wave: Hallyu in Asian/Asian American communities and beyond

Since the early 2000s, Korean and other Asian scholars have examined *Hallyu* in term of its extension into lifestyle, e.g. food, tourism and fashion (Lee 2005), as a new wave of globalization (Howard 2002), or according to regionalization within Asia or the Asianization of Korean pop (Siriyuvasak and Shin 2007). Japan long dominated East Asian media and cultural markets, and successfully entered Western markets due to hybridity, being “culturally odorless (Iwabuchi 1998: p166)”, or *Mukokuseki*—stateless, what Iwabuch terms, “transnationalist ambivalence” — “an ambivalence associated with the difficulty in apprehending precisely what is Japanese about Japanese popular culture (Iwabuchi 2002; p448).” By contrast, Korean wave has been analyzed as a more regional phenomenon since the late 1990s, linked to “a sense of familiarity among people in Asia” (Cho 2005). Many Asian scholars have pointed out that the cultural hybridity of Korean culture might be a key factor of the success of Korean pop culture in the Asian market (Huat 2004; Iwabuchi 2005; Shim 2006; Jung 2009; Kim 2011); Korean pop culture is modern and trendy, while also being more accessible to the Asian audience than Western pop cultural products (Huat 2004; Erni and Chua 2005; Cho 2005), due to shared values and emotions among Asian cultures, such as family values and respect for elders (Iwabuchi 2005). Korean pop culture is thus culturally proximate — palatable to Chinese and other East Asians — and has thus penetrated cultural industries (Kim 2011). Growing market potential, in Asia in general and China in particular, lured Korean entertainment companies and entertainers to invest in other Asian countries.
Hallyu in the U.S.

Hallyu did not break into the American mainstream as it did elsewhere; Aria, Taylor and others are rather exceptional cases. While some other Korean entertainers and products had a widespread impact in the U.S., such as Speed Racer (2008) and Ninja Assassin (2009), and the actress Yoonjin Kim of the TV series Lost and Mistress, the Korean Wave first seemed to explode in the U.S. in 2012 with Psy's Gangnam Style. Yet, certain populations in the U.S, particularly Asian/Asian American communities, have a longer history of consuming Korean culture. Tyler, a 37-year-old Malaysian social worker working near Chinatown in Downtown Manhattan, moved to the U.S. at 25 to go to college. His initial contact with Korean culture and people goes back to the early 2000s in Malaysia, and he was further exposed to Korean culture during college in Albany, New York. Tyler vividly remembers his non-Korean Asian peers beginning to talk a lot about Korean pop culture. He believes that this trend has only grown since then.

In Chinatown you can start buying – in the store they’re selling foreign DVDs, like Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Korea and maybe 70% to 80% are Korean DVDs. … And then the other thing is the Chinese newspaper. Sometimes they’ll put advertisement. I’ve never seen any store where they say ‘we have dress clutching from China’. I’ve never seen that in Chinatown in New York but I see on the newspaper they say, hey, our store has a lot of imported Korean dresses.

- Tyler, a 37-year-old social worker, Malaysian

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162 However, though Korean media have highlighted Psy’s success in the U.S. mainstream by connecting it to Hallyu, his worldwide recognition may be not a sign of global acceptance of South Korea’s soft power, but an unexpected consequence of technological developments, e.g. YouTube as a platform to attract global audience to the song with an English-lyric catchy hook (Ligaya 2012).
As my Korean American interviewee Sunmee explains, video and DVD rental was a major opportunity for Koreans to consume Korean pop culture and maintain transnational ties before the internet, as was true for Chinese (Zhou and Cai 2002; Shi 2005) and Latin American communities across the nation. Notably, nowadays not only this ethnic media but also Korean pop culture can be found in other ethnic enclaves; Tyler often sees Korean DVDs in Chinese stores. Kaylee, a 21-year-old Chinese American college student born and raised in New York City, likewise remembers her first exposure to Korean pop culture through her mother.\textsuperscript{163}

I never was until my mom started buying DVD’s from Chinatown and then she’d go home and it was like, I think learning something new would be interesting. So she started watching Korean dramas and got my sister in to it. It was kind of silly everyone is like crying and snots and tears and stuff like that so it’s all silly. One day my TV in my room broke down so I was watching Korean dramas with them. … I was crying. Then there was a scene in the movie where they were in the hospital and they were finally reunited, I just started nose bleeding. It was like two rows of tears and two rows of nosebleeds and it was kind of ironic to me because that never happened to me. I never cried for a movie before, I was like sob, everything dawned on me.

-Kaylee, a 21-year-old college student, Chinese American

Kaylee was raised in a Chinese speaking environment; because she believes that it shows respect for her parents, she learned Chinese to communicate with them. Her China-born mother, who watched Korean dramas and movies with Chinese subtitles, introduced Kaylee to that

\textsuperscript{163} I met Kaylee in 2010, as one of my students in Korean language class at a community college in New York City. Although she took my classes twice and spontaneously talked about herself, I did not know that her father was a Korean Chinese until a formal interview with her, a year after the class was over. My perception of her as Chinese was based on her introduction of herself as Chinese or Chinese American and her family name, which can be interpreted as either Chinese or Korean. Her father did not grow up speaking Korean or with exposure to Korean culture; he was very Chinese-ized. Thus when asked her ethnic background, she hesitated but clearly stated that Korea is a part of her, particularly after spending a few weeks in the country.
culture. In the Chinese community of New York City, exposure to Korean popular culture was common enough since the late 1990s, whether before or after (im)migration to the U.S. Therefore, some (im)migrants could connect to the homeland even through culturally proximate ethnic media (Zhou and Cai 2002).

The popularity of Korean pop culture extends to younger English-speaking Asian Americans, sometimes through their parents but more often through peers – either Koreans or other Asians. Nora, a Filipino American who grew up in L.A., recalls learning about Korean pop culture from her close Korean friend in 2006, as a freshman at New York University.

I think I had just gotten very familiar with that [Korean culture] and so maybe that influenced me when I met other Koreans too and maybe I identified them in a much stronger way – and I just think in the city and in NYU there was just a very high population of Chinese and Koreans too so it’s just pretty my much – it felt very natural. I wasn’t really seeking it out but I think when you meet people and I had to approach someone I always feel more comfortable talking to Asian people for some reason.

-Nora, a 23-year-old office worker, Filipino American

Nora immigrated to L.A. at two years old, growing up in Atwater Village, which she recalls as half Mexican and a half Filipino; her friends and acquaintances back home are mostly Filipinos, and she did not know many Koreans despite their concentration in L.A. She began to hang out with Koreans in college. In Nora’s case, her Korean peers at New York University, whether Korean nationals or Korean Americans, played the role of cultural transmitters. Nora was introduced to Korean pop culture by Korean acquaintances; it became even more

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164 According to the U.S. Census 2010, 29.6% of Korean population in the U.S. resided in California, the highest in the U.S. In L.A., 2.9% of city’s population is ethnic Korean. For more information, see more at [http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/los-angeles-population/](http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/los-angeles-population/)
widespread through the media and other co-ethnics in their communities. Ellie, a 19-year-old Taiwanese American who immigrated to New York City at age 6, reminisces about watching Korean dramas and listening to Korean pop music with her Taiwanese and Chinese peers when she was 9th grade in 2008.

Oh yeah, that was huge. With my Asian friends – they’re not Koreans, the ones in high school were really into Korean dramas, at first it was Taiwanese dramas but then it switched to Korean dramas because we realized that they’re actually better or made better. Because the actresses would look nicer or the plot will be sad or more riveting.

- Ellie, a 19-year-old college student, Taiwanese American

Like other American girls, she and her close friends would have sleepovers at each other’s houses; but they would play Asian pop music. One day, one of her friends turn on the Korean pop music and music videos at their sleepover, and Ellie thought “wow, these people [Korean pop singers] are really pretty.” Her friends, who were immersed in Korean pop music and dramas, were Taiwanese and Chinese Americans. Likewise, Aiden, a 21-year-old Taiwanese American college student, was also introduced to Korean pop music by a Chinese American woman during college. He said “My friend [a Chinese American] showed me my first video and I was like this is crazy but then after a while I started liking it and it’s been pretty much pulling me into the culture.”

Though Hallyu has not been prominent in the U.S., Asian Americans were exposed to new trends through their home countries. The shared values that Asian scholars consider a main factor facilitating the Korean wave might hold true for Asians living in the U.S. as well. Tyler, a
37-year-old Malaysian social worker who has lived in the U.S. for twelve years, explains that he was attracted by Korean culture in part for its familiar values.

I think that I was watching some family kind of Korean movie and I liked the family in the Korean movie, they’re very family oriented.... Yes, maybe Malaysia and Korean. They respect all the people at home, they have a big family – sometimes drama happens but it’s always like things happen around the family.

-Tyler, a 37-year-old social worker, Malaysian

For Tyler, Asian values shared by Korean pop culture encourage his cultural consumption.

This trend is not limited to Asian viewers and audiences in the U.S. Interestingly, younger Americans from various ethnic backgrounds also show cultural proximity to Korean culture by comparing and contrasting it to American and/or their own ethnic cultures. This is particularly prominent among Caribbean Americans, who also report a high emphasis on education and family values (Waters 1994; 2009; Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001), as well as Latinos. Zoe is a 21-year-old second generation New York Puerto Rican college student; like many other non-Korean interviewees, she is intrigued by both Korean and Japanese cultures. She thinks that her own ethnic culture has some commonalities with Asian culture in general, and with Korean and Japanese cultures in particular.

We’re respectful to our elders. I think here now [in the U.S.], it’s more accustomed for people to talk back to your parents and stuff. When you go back to Puerto Rico you don’t do that, you treat your parents as if they’re the greatest thing on earth. They come first. Whenever we make food they’re the first people to get fed because they’re the elders.

-Zoe, a 21-year-old New York college student, Puerto Rican
Although Asian/Asian Americans are most often ‘positively’ stereotyped as a hard-working and family-oriented racial group (Saito 1997; Tuan 1998; Kim 2003; Zhou 2004; Kawai 2005), these values also are shared by the Caribbean immigrants and their children (Waters 1994; 2009; Kasinitz and Vickerman 2001). Zoe points out that Puerto Ricans underscore family values and respect to the elderly, like Asians and Asian immigrants. Likewise, Mila, a second generation Dominican American, affirms the collectivities of Dominican culture.

And then also Dominican culture is very collectivist, like there is no individual anything in Dominican Republic, everything is about family, community – even I have a friend who I used to live with who’s Dominican too and she’s from a small town and like 300 people from that town live in New York City and they all get together all the time.

- Mila, a 25-year-old graduate student, Dominican American

These two values, family orientation and collectivity, often are presumed and misinterpreted as ‘Asian values’ and ‘Confucian values’ (Saito 1997; Tuan 1998; Kim 2003; Zhou 2004; Kawai 2005). However, as Mary C. Waters argues in Black Identities (Waters 2009), and as my Caribbean interviewees would agree, these family values and collectivism are shared by many other immigrants and their children. Such cultural proximity attracted many of my interviewees to Korean pop culture, in contrast to the allure of cultural difference or exoticism; for instance, while Mila doesn't feel that she fits into Dominican culture, she understands Korean and Japanese cultures by comparing and contrasting them to her own ethnic and American cultures. The age hierarchy or respect to the elderly, which in fact often causes generational dissension in Korea, is understood as a positive and shared cultural factor by non-Korean consumers. In this
process, what Iwabuchi calls “familiar difference (Iwabuchi 2005)” extends beyond non-Asian viewers to broader audiences in the U.S.

However, these interviewees found cultural commonalities and shared values much later, after they had immersed themselves in Korean culture. Outside of Asian communities, such exposure is usually unexpected. Taylor, a 25-year-old African American woman who was active in the protests, explains how she came to delve into Korean pop culture in 2009.

Do you know Perez Hilton? It’s like a celebrity blog site and he’s into Korean music, he loves Korean music. Just the other day he actually posted something about Girls Generation. He’s very popular in Hollywood and he loves a lot of Korean music and he was the one that really first opened that door for me because I didn’t really know.

-Taylor, a 25-year-old woman, African American

Taylor was born to Caribbean parents and raised in a Black neighborhood in Queens; she went to all-Black schools in her neighborhood and had little contact with Asians, until she began to attend an art high school in Bayside, Queens. There, she “started to meet people from different cultures and to open up a little bit,” and then “with college [City University of New York] it opened up further.” Her interest in Korean pop culture was first piqued by Perez Hilton, a celebrity blogger, who sometimes posted about Korean pop culture.

He posted something and the first artist I ever listened to was Um Jung-Hwa, it was a song she did with TOP [a member of boy band, Big Bang], Disco. And I just loved the

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165 Perez Hilton, the professional name of Mario Armando Lavandeira, Jr., is a U.S. celebrity blogger who writes about Hollywood gossip. He sometimes posts about Korean pop music. See more at http://perezhilton.com/

166 Although she mentions that her parents and other family members are Caribbean, she identifies herself as an African American born and raised in New York City.
song and I started sharing it with all my friends. I saw TOP and I was like I have to find out who this guy is which led me to Big Bang and I just fell in love when I listened to the music.

-Taylor, a 25-year-old woman, African American

Most of my non-Asian interviewees who were born and/or raised in New York City likewise told me that they did not grow up with Korean or other Asian friends, or at least never established close ties with them. There were a few exceptions, such as Santino, a 20-year-old Mexican American college student who grew up in Flushing and mingled with Asian kids in school; and Zoe, a 21-year-old student, who was introduced to Korean culture by her mother’s Korean boyfriend and Asian friends.

For non-Asians, technological development and global cultural circulation of social media is hugely important in accessing Korean pop culture (Dator and Seo 2004; Ryoo 2009; Cha and Kim 2011; Lie 2012). Outside of Asia, the power of new media seems to be even more prominent (Chung 2011; Ono and Kwon 2013; Ju and Lee 2015). Lucia explains how she was exposed to Korean culture.

I was watching on YouTube but YouTube recommended a video, it was as an Asian group and it was 2NE1. So I clicked on it and it was Fire and I liked the song and then from there I went on to dramas I fell in love with everything.

-Lucia, a 20-year-old college student, Dominican American

Lucia was born in Dominican Republic and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of five; growing up in Harlem, she did not have Asian or Korean friends, and she was first exposed to K-pop and Korean dramas via a YouTube recommendation. She spent $225 to go to the SM Town
world tour concert in New York City in October 2011, and is saving up for a concert with the Korean boy band Bing Bang; she felt this was “a lifetime chance to be able to see them until I go to Korea.” She watches Korean dramas “all the time,” but believes that there are “crazier fans than me.” Like, Taylor, Aria, and others, Lucia did not know of Koreatown in Manhattan before her foray into Korean pop, although she probably passed by it several times. When another Latino friend showed her Koreatown in 2010, she began to immerse herself into the space. At the beginning, she enjoyed just walking around Koreatown—whether to shop or not—and being surrounded by Koreans and Korean things.

Mila, a 25-year-old Dominican American graduate student, echoes Lucia’s first experience in Koreatown. Born and raised in the Bronx and Manhattan, she did not have Asian friends before high school. Yet her high school, located in midtown Manhattan, had a good number of Asian students; a fellow student, from Japan, opened the door for her both to Japanese and Korean pop cultures in 2005, and introduced her to Koreatown. Initially, Mila and her Japanese friend would go to 32nd Street to shop or look around Morning Glory, a character-based stationery store from South Korea; later, they branched out to other stores. Mila was first hooked in by Korean dramas, waiting for new episodes with English subtitles. While most traditional ethnic media targets co-ethnic groups – both immigrants and transnational migrants – and provides entertainment and information about their home countries (Shiramizu 2000; Shi 2005), non-Koreans, especially younger groups, often use websites offering Korean pop culture (Ju and Lee 2015), albeit often through illegal websites.
It’s quick now, when I first started out I used to have to wait. I remember I was actually waiting every week for them to finish translating an episode. The people were doing it on their free time and they would a website telling us ‘we’re 75% done’, you know. … A lot of these organizations will put up ads saying ‘we’re looking for Chinese translators, we’re looking for Japanese translators, we’re looking for Korean translators’. … So similarly they do that with the shows and they would have each groups of about 10-15 translators all doing different languages.

-Mila, a 25-year-old graduate student, Dominican American

These websites are operated by volunteers who dedicate their time and effort to making Korean products accessible to English (and other language) speakers. Although remaining somewhat limited to a small number of viewers, the online websites for dramas, shows and music became a platform for these non-Korean consumers in the U.S. Mila finds that the popularity of Korean culture in the U.S. has slowly expanded to non-Asians.

I remember that it was all young people my age, in college, most of the people doing the translations were also in college. … I remember I was reading one of the comments and it was a man, he said he’s a 50-something year old White man, he’s watching the show, he said he loves the show so much, the actress is so beautiful and the lead actor amazing.

-Mila, a 25-year-old graduate student, Dominican American

Although Hallyu remains among a relatively small fraction of the younger population, more recently it has attracted more non-traditional fans that Mila had not imagined being interested a few years ago. The role of new media is prominent in a global infusion of cultural products, liberating consumers from traditional adaptation. Now various sources from free website to Netflix provide more opportunities for non-Koreans to venture into unfamiliar cultures.
K-pop and Koreatown as a cultural space.

Taylor, Aria, and their friends who routinely went to Koreatown to eat and hang out after the demonstration in front of JYP entertainment building are part of the trend of non-Korean, online-based K-pop fans in New York City actively expanding their cultural experience to the physical space. Rather than limit themselves within the virtual community, they share time and space. Lucia, a 20-year-old Dominican American college student, initially wondered how Korean food that she saw in the drama would taste.

Me and my friends decided to eat Korean food to see if we would like it. But I research what type of food to eat. So I ate Kimchi Buchingae, the pancake. We were eating that for like 3 years over and over because we were afraid to try other stuff.
- Lucia, a 20-year-old college student, Dominican American

Lucia's exposure to Korean media – mostly dramas and music videos – eventually led her to try Korean food with her Latin American peers in Koreatown. Yet, because she exposes herself to Korean culture entirely through the media without knowing any Koreans, she and her friends were rather cautious. Lucia and her friend’s experience were circumscribed and restricted within the limited information online. Despite not knowing any Korean and having the same food for three years, but she recalls the experience as fun and exciting, later “I fell in love with Karaoke,” she said. Likewise, Mila also started to eat Korean food and frequent Koreatown after watching TV shows and dramas.

I have more important things about Korean dramas that make me go crazy all the time is the food. They eat so much in Korean shows so I’m always hungry when I’m watching Korean TV shows and so I started eating Korean food.
Mila, a 25-year-old graduate student, Dominican American

Now she makes her own Korean food. In New York, she did not often cook Korean food because of the many options in Manhattan and Queens. But her year in Ohio, where there were limited options for Korean food, encouraged her to learn how to cook the cuisine following YouTube tutorials. Mila's comfort food is now neither Dominican nor American, but Korean: “Korean food is my favorite kind of food even over Japanese I don’t know, I just love it so much. When I feel sick at home I eat Korean food.”

For both Lucia and Mila, their experiences in Manhattan’s Koreatown resemble and resonate with what tourists seek out – authentic experiences (Sims 2009). Koreatown is chosen because of “anticipation, through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures” and the “out of the ordinary” (Urry and Larsen 2011: p4) experiences the neighborhood offers that provides “a temporal rupture with rules of daily life” (Korstanje and de Escalona 2014: p176). These perceptions and expectations are constructed and sustained through media, separated from their everyday experiences (Urry and Larsen 2011: p4-5). Food, in particular, is believed to be authentic and traditional in Koreatown, and serves to center visitors’ understanding of Korean culture in the marketplace.

Consumption in Koreatown by non-Koreans is not limited to food. Fashion and cosmetics also are items that draw many non-Koreans. Tyler shares his experience with a Chinese friend who often shops at a small accessories shop on 32nd Street.
She lived in Flushing but she worked in Connecticut. Anytime she comes down we go shopping. And she goes to K-town for shopping... She’s a Chinese and she’s very much into Korean culture. We went to the store she came to buy earrings... Yeah, very pricey. She’s like one of the big customers in the stores because she would spend like $300-$400. .. A few hours. She buys everything. Because they have a lot of handmade stuff they’re quite expensive. I went there twice with her. I know one time she spend like $300.

-Tyler, a 37-year-old social worker, Malaysian

Likewise, Emma regularly shops for Korean cosmetics on 32\textsuperscript{nd} Street. Emma was born and raised in Belarus, immigrating to New York City at 17, in 2001. During the Beijing Olympics in 2008, she listened to a promotional song, “Beijing Welcomes You,” sung by various artists from China as well as Japan, Taiwan and South Korea; Hangen, a Chinese member of the Korean boy band Super-junior, was one of the artists.\textsuperscript{167} She became interested first in his group, then naturally expanded to other groups and Korean pop music in general; she even flew to L.A. three times for K-pop concerts.

Watching these K-pop stars in turn led to an interest in fashion in general and cosmetic products in particular. Emma likes to try make-up products as a hobby. Researching a product she had sampled and liked, she learned that it was Korean, and started searching out more Korean cosmetics. Emma thinks that Koreans, particularly women, take much more care of their appearance than Americans; although Korean Americans often complain that Korean nationals and FOBs in general are highly judgmental of their appearance, Emma does not find this to be a bad thing. At the end of the interview, she shyly confessed me that after she got into Korean pop

\textsuperscript{167} In order to target the Chinese market, it is common for Korean girl groups and boy bands to include one or two Chinese members. SM Entertainment, one of the biggest labels in South Korea, was a pioneer of this tactic; Hangeng was the first Chinese singer debuting as part of a South Korean pop group.
culture, she began to do her make-up like Asian women, by highlighting natural nude skin tones, rather than the thick make-up typical of Eastern European women.

Probably once every month I also go there to shop for makeup...Yeah. But I also know Missha -- the brand. They opened U.S. website and now you can order stuff online, so I like them too... Because its – I find a lot of it is actually better. … Well, mostly skin care products. I am not that much into actual painting of my face. … So I find that a lot of the Korean ones are just better in quality. … Because they care a lot more about skin care, so they will try anything to look better.

-Emma, a 27-year-old working in insurance, Belarusian American

The patronage of Tyler’s Chinese friend and Emma at Koreatown stores is part of a growing trend. Sun-young Shin, a director of Korea International Trade Association’s Beijing branch, wrote in the Korea Times in 2014 that Korean brands and products that appeared or were advertised in Korean dramas have increased in sales (Shin 2014). In general, Korean brands beyond the popular electronics (Samsung) and cars (Hyundai) are making significant inroads in the U.S. market. According to Fortune, “South Korean beauty brands have been claiming a bigger stake of the American beauty market, which is estimated to be $44 billion dollars, according to the NPD Group (Valhouli 2015).” Although one can access Korean products at some megastores such as Target and specialty shops like Sephora, Koreatown offers unique opportunities for non-Koreans to explore Korean beauty products and accessories.169

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168 A well-known English make-up artist, Lisa Eldridge, published a make-up tutorial on Korean products she bought during a business trip in Korea. See the tutorial at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OAHNuE3Nw0&feature=youtu.be

169 There are four cosmetics stores in Koreatown: Tony Moly, Faceshop, Mask Bar, and Skylake. Tony Moly and the Faceshop are popular cosmetic brands in South Korea, carrying low- and mid-range product lines made by their own companies and targeting consumers in their 20s and 30s; the Mask Bar and Skylake sell Korean cosmetics from various brands.
The first wave of consumers, influenced by Hallyu, are shaped by the emergence of new media. As a new generation of new media consumers, they often expand and actualize their interests in Korean culture, mostly consumed online in virtual space and by visiting and consuming ethnic culture in Koreatown. As seen earlier, their consumption behaviors vary from patronizing restaurants and bars to purchasing beauty products—and their consumption patterns have only diversified and intensified in the past few years.

The second wave: Foodies

Asian cuisines such as Chinese and Japanese have long enticed New Yorkers. Chinese food was a pioneer in attracting non-ethnic customers, dating from the Chinese Exclusion Era at the earliest. By the 1870s, Chinatown in Lower East Side of New York openly catered to White working-class men – mostly customers of the brothels, opium dens, and gambling houses (Light 1974). Chinese restaurants in Chinatown also appealed to wealthy urban bohemians who sought for exotic adventure, mostly culinary. As Chinese immigrants deliberately created new Americanized Chinese food, e.g. chop suey, General Tso’s chicken, and fortune cookies, the Chinese palate began to penetrate Americans’ tables, allowing Chinese Americans to extend their business outside Chinatown (Barbas 2003; Liu 2009). Much later, Japanese foods, especially sushi, have similarly been integrated and incorporated into American cuisine, as seen in California rolls and Philadelphia rolls, and considerable enthusiasm for authentic Japanese-style food (Edward 2012).

Like other immigrants confronting racial discrimination and language barriers, many Korean immigrants rely on self-employment in service businesses such as groceries, dry
cleaners, nail salons, and wholesale and retail sales of imported Korean (and later Chinese) merchandise (Kim 1981; Min 1996; Light and Bonacich 1991; Lie 2004; Abelmann and Lie 2009). Notably, the small number of Korean immigrants in the ethnic food business have congregated in several Koreatowns across the country rather than expanding beyond enclaves, and these restaurants historically only served Korean immigrants and their children.

New ethnic cuisines, such as Peruvian and Korean, are increasingly enticing consumers because cuisines embedded in the American palate for a generation or so are not considered as 'exotic' as they once were (Johnston and Baumann 2014: p23). As food experts, such as journalists, writers, and chefs, sought new tastes, “authentic” and “exotic” Korean food, whether imagined or real, gained traction for foodies in New York City. American chefs and the U.S. restaurant industry have indeed been quick to catch up with the trend. The National Restaurant Association,¹⁷⁰ the largest food service trade association by membership, annually publishes the report “What’s Hot: Culinary Forecast.” Based on an online survey of 1,283 members of the American Culinary Federation between October and November in 2013, in which 258 items on restaurant menus in 2013 across the country were rated as “hot trend,” “yesterday’s news” or “perennial favorite,” Korean food was ranked second, following Peruvian cuisine.

In a recent interview with Condé Nast Traveler, Anthony Bourdain pointed out that “Korean food is an emerging and important cuisine” (Hill 2014). In episode, which aired on August 25, 2013 on his CNN TV show, Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown, Bourdain noted that “Koreans can well remember when nobody was interested in their food. Now it’s confusingly au courant. Must be strange for the owners who’ve just been doing what they’ve been doing for

Korean food has been gaining rapid popularity across the nation, particularly in New York City and L.A. In New York, foodies have discovered Korean food and begun to travel to Koreatown or other Korean restaurants in New York City in order to try “authentic” Korean cuisine.

Tasha, a 38-year-old African American librarian, is one of these non-Korean foodies frequenting Koreatown. She was born and raised in D.C. and came to New York City in 2007; she currently live in Harlem with her daughter, works on the Upper East Side, and goes to graduate school in Brooklyn. Although she is not particularly interested in Korean pop culture, she has been fond of Korean food for five years and is now a regular in Koreatown.

I used to go to Korean festival in the park. The first time I went was like 2 years ago and I became obsessed. And I was still eating seaweed – and so I had checked out all the fried chicken places in Koreatown. It’s really tasty and delicious. It’s just really good. … Yes, there’s some kind of soy sauce, one is sweet and the other one is spicy. Those are good. I can eat them without the sauce. So I love these sort of Korean interpretations of Americans standards. I like Gimbap [Seaweed rice rolls] made with tuna salad.

-Tasha, a 38-year-old librarian, African American

Tasha had tasted Korean food years back as a college student in Maryland. She did not grow up with any Asian friends, yet one of her close friends during college was Korean, and sometimes invited her over for Korean food that her friend’s mother cooked for them. After moving to New York City, Koreatown became a regular destination for her for dining and groceries. She and her

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171 A transcript of this episode is available on the CNN website at http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1308/25/abpu.01.html
ex-husband, who grew up with a Korean American friend when he was younger, used to go to Koreatown to dine together; even her young daughter likes eating Korean food.

I used to go with my daughter, my young daughter also loved Korean food. When she was like 2 years old she loved these little [dried] anchovies, she could eat them like chips.

-Tasha, a 38-year-old librarian, African American

Around 2010, Koreatown restaurants became even more popular among non-Koreanfoodies. Brandon, a 34-year-old Chinese American book editor, is one of the newer consumers. He was born and raised in Hong Kong and immigrated to Seattle at the age of ten; he moved to New York in 2009 for graduate school. Unlike his other Asian counterparts introduced to Koreatown by other fellow Asians, his first visit to Koreatown was brought about by a group of White friends.

The first time I went was I am pretty sure very shortly after I came here. … I had moved here with another friend, who had been here for a while. I would mostly go out with her friends. These are mostly white friends. They suggested to go to the restaurant in Koreatown. … I did not understand why it was called K-town because it was only a street. [But] at that time I felt it was already a big thing by then.

-Brandon, a 34-year-old book editor, Chinese American

Although Brandon was first introduced to Korean food in the late 1990s by a Taiwanese American friend, he did not eat it regularly until moving to New York City. As a newbie in New York City, he had explored several neighborhoods for the first two years, to get to know the city better; later it became pretty regular for him to eat and drink in Koreatown. Now he spends almost as much time in Koreatown as Chinatown, which he considers “surprising” for Chinese
Americans. Yet he does not seem to be an outlier. During my interviews with Asians and Asian Americans, most of whom are Chinese or of Chinese descent, most told me that they spend more time in Koreatown than in Chinatown. As Mei, a 23-year-old Chinese graduate student, puts in “I never hang out in Manhattan Chinatown because I think it’s a dangerous place.”

**Familiarity**

In line with popular culture, Food also is understood and interpreted as being “familiar” to their own ethnic cuisine; this is most prominent among Asians and Asian Americans. Tyler explains that he prefers Korean food to Chinese food because of the former’s similarity to Malaysian foods.

> And when I compare Chinese food to Korean food I like Korean food better just because Korean food is quite similar to the food in my country. Malaysian style is spicy, Thai food is a little bit sour but the Malaysian one is spicy, they fry chilly with the seafood. I think I find the similarity.
> -Tyler, a 37-year-old social worker, Malaysian

Brandon echoes Tyler on the similarity and familiarity of Korean food; but while that led him to explore it in the first place, its “exoticness” led him to delve into it further.

> It’s nice to have bit familiar, but not too familiar. You know Chinese food it’s great, but I’ve had it all my life, you know. It becomes more comfort food, you grew up with it. Whereas foods like Japanese food or Korean food, or Thai food things like that, they are very familiar, because that’s very similar to Chinese food, but it’s just little different. Different enough you have little exotic feeling towards it… Korean BBQ is also interesting. Chinese don’t have BBQ, it’s kind of western thing. You marry Eastern Asian
meats, soy sauce based marinated meat, with Western style cooking, which is grilling, and you have something again, familiar, but different enough to be exotic.

-Brandon, a 34-year-old book editor, Chinese American

Korean food is a *bit familiar, but not too familiar* for Brandon, who was born and raised in Hong Kong before immigrating to Seattle at the age of 10. He does not remember his first time eating Korean food, yet clearly recalls how Korean food quickly began to penetrate into Chinese palates during the 1990s, followed by Japanese food crazes. He distinctly remembers that he liked Japanese food in Hong Kong because “it wasn’t another Chinese restaurant.” His interest in Korean food follows the same path.

The ‘familiar’ taste of Korean food also is noted by some Caribbean informants. Taylor explains her experience with Korean food by comparing it to her ethnic food.

Well, you’d be surprised but Caribbean food. I’m American but my family and everybody else is from the Caribbean. You’d be surprised that Caribbean food and Asian food in general is very similar. .. I went to a Korean place with my mom and they had smoked herring in packages and they had half the stuff eat here in H-Mart [Korean chain grocery store in Koreatown]. ..... So I took her to H-Mart and she saw that half the stuff we eat at home are here. And she really likes kimchi, I like kimchi too but she really loves it. ..... I bought a kimchi at a festival and she said he loved it and she went home and she made kimchi spaghetti. She uses kimchi in everything, she just loved it.

- Taylor, a 25-year-old college graduate, African American

Taylor, born to Caribbean parents raised in St. Albans, Queens, finds some similarities between Korean food and the food that her mother cooks for her. Likewise, Mila, a Dominican American woman, comments on the similarity between her ethnic cuisine and Korean food.
So a lot of people think that Dominican Republic culture is like Mexico or other places but because it’s an island nation it’s pretty different. Like in Mexico, say, the main thing that they eat has to be beans. In Dominican Republic you don’t eat beans, you eat rice. So that’s pretty interesting, two cultures surrounded by rice.

-Mila, a 25-year-old graduate student, Dominican American

As introduced earlier in this chapter, her interests in Japanese history and culture led Mila to Korean pop culture and food. She dines in Korean restaurants, cooks Korean food, and believes that her comfort food is Korean food. Yet her interest in the new cuisine does not come from out of the blue; Dominican food is somewhat similar to Korean food, and they share rice as a staple. In this sense, Korean food, for Mila and Taylor, is “familiar but not too familiar.”

Although most of my non-Korean interviewees try to connect themselves to Korea by seeking cultural proximity, Elena, whose ethnic background is a mix of Irish, Hungarian, Syrian, and Mongolian, tells a different story.

As far as food is concerned we have always loved spicy food and our family is very adventurous with food. We grew up in a homogenously German region, but our family always veered towards Asian cooking. Our mother is a wonderful Thai and Vietnamese cook and has begun to learn Korean recipes due to our love of Korean food.

-Elena, a 25-year-old homemaker living in PA, White American

Elena and her twin sister Isabelle were born and raised in a German area of Pennsylvania, yet grew up enjoying culinary adventures and appreciating cultural diversity with her family members. Although first immersed in Korean pop culture and food, notably BBQ, as college students at Fordham University in New York City, they were already used to enjoy various Asian cuisines. Likewise, Tasha, a 38-year-old African American librarian, had no trouble eating
Korean food because she has already eaten a lot of fermented foods. Yet they did not note similarities between their food and Korean cuisine, rather finding Korean food exotic and adventurous.

**Omnivorousness and ethnic food**

By 2010, the popularity of Korean popular culture and food centered on Asian communities in a limited fashion in the form of transnational consumption, with goods directly imported from South Korea. The expansion of Korean food to non-Asian communities in New York City intensified in 2014, as food critics, celebrity chefs, food experts and the mainstream media have taken notice of Korean food. However, this trend has less to do with South Korea’s nation branding and globalization of Korean food projects or the *Hallyu* phenomenon than with preexisting social changes in the U.S. ‘gourmet’ foodscape. The height of dining in the U.S. long prioritized French haute cuisine, which was enjoyed by a small fraction of the upper classes; this culinary landscape was elitist and upscale, and treated as a form of conspicuous consumption (Ray 2007; Hyman 2008; Johnston and Baumann 2014). However, the U.S. culinary scene has slowly been moving toward openness and diversity since the 1970s.

Peterson and Kern (1996) suggest that high-status Americans have shifted from cuisine based on snobbish exclusion to omnivorousness. Because gourmet food culture is a cultural realm, like arts consumption in general, food consumption signals status; rather than maintaining narrow cultural references, these omnivores have a broader range of cultural knowledge due to their embrace of certain forms of lowbrow culture (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and
This change and the ensuing discourse have been shaped and intensified by food media, e.g. food writers and critics in food magazines, TV shows with celebrity chefs, and their cookbooks (Johnston and Baumann 2007: 2015; Hyman 2008; Hansen 2008). Food writing started in earnest around the Second World War: Gourmet magazine began in 1941; by the late 1950s. Craig Claiborne of the New York Times had considerable influence on the American culinary scene; Food & Wine magazine and other cuisine-focused publications rose during the late ’70s throughout the ’90s. These mainstream media transformed the U.S. culinary scene; French haute cuisine, only enjoyed by few elites, has expanded to and slowly drawn in the American middle class, while higher classes began to seek exotic foods to differentiate themselves from mass appetites (Johnston and Baumann 2007: 2014; Hansen 2008).

Television furthered the widening reach of foodie culture. The Food Network, devoted entirely to food, first aired in 1993 and has steadily grown in viewership since then (Hyman 2008; Mitchell 2010). Through this platform, chefs have appeared on TV shows, bringing their viewers into their kitchens and making gourmet food available to the general public with their recipes and instructions. And they have earned considerable fame. While earlier celebrity chefs were most often associated with foreign and upscale fine dining, particularly French (Hyman 2008), the food and dining industry started to focus on American chefs in the 1980s. Although the Food Network offered Asian recipes palatable to non-Asians, they were largely created by non-Asian chefs, excepting Ming Tsai, who, on “East meets West,” offered various Asian fusion recipes. Asian chefs cooking Asian food did not break into the mainstream for many years. However, now, with celebrity chefs on TV networks and various media, food culture has become

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172 Peterson and Kern examine art consumption in general, focusing on music in particular.
a leisure pastime for the general American audience (Hollows 2003). While the resulting mass audiences for foodie culture carry the implication of lowbrow tastes, it also works in tandem with the elitist pursuit of novelty and authenticity to bring ‘exotic’ foods to the common palate.

The emergence of Korean food seems to have started with its infusion into other ethnic foods, as seen in the success of fusion cuisine by Korean American chefs. While Korean restaurant entrepreneurs highlight their authenticity, particularly in New York City and L.A.’s Koreatowns, its fusion with various other American ethnic cuisines to ease the American palate into the new taste was key. In New York, David Chang became a superstar in New York’s culinary scene with the fusion Momofuku Noodle Bar, Momofuku Ssäm Bar and Momofuku Ko; in L.A., Roy Choi has attracted foodies with food trucks blending Korean cuisine with the ever-popular taco (Sifton 2012). Both Chang and Choi, and Korean American Corey Lee from San Francisco’s Michelin three-star restaurant Benu, have won Best New Chef in Food & Wine magazine, among other awards; none of these three cook Korean food per se, but they all infuse their cuisine with ideas and ingredients from Korean tradition.

*New Media for food*

Buzz from friends, and on online review sites such as Yelp and Zagat have also lured non-Korean consumers to Koreatown. Yet rather than remain as passive receivers of the goods and services, these non-Korean consumers, as prosumers -- empowered consumers -- actively produce the content they consume (Izvercian, Seran and Buciuman 2013; Morreale 2014; Zukin, Lindeman and Hurson 2015). Ellie, a 21-year-old Taiwanese American college student, often relies on her friends who have already explored Koreatown restaurants and word of mouth, and also
frequently checks Yelp because “there’re a lot of people’s comments and ratings.” While non-Koreans like Ellie have diverse sources of information, people without Korean associates rely heavily on internet buzz to acquire information and expertise (Liu and Park 2015).

A consumer searching Korean restaurants by filtering for Korean, Koreatown, Manhattan, NY -- a rectangular space from 30th and 34th Streets between 5th and 6th Avenues – will find reviews of 40 Korean restaurants, bars and noraebangs (Karaoke bars) as of September 25, 2015. The most reviewed and the highest-rated restaurant is Woorijip, a low-priced buffet style Korean restaurant with 1,741 reviews; it is followed by BCD Tofu House, with 803 reviews. Woorijip, meaning “our house” in Korean, is very popular among the younger generations because of low prices and late hours; they also offer a selection of beer and Korean/Asian liquor.

When you need to grab and go but still desire that home cooked Korean meal, Woorijip is the place to go!
-Huamei Y. reviewed on September 15, 2015

My Korean national interviewees might not agree with Huamei that the restaurant offers home style Korean food. Nonetheless, the buffet/restaurant is also popular among younger Korean nationals, not because of the taste or its authenticity, but because of cheap price and convenience. As analyzed in Chapter 5, Korean nationals believe that immigrant-owned Korean restaurants do not appropriately deliver the authentic taste and flavor of Korea, except few places. They do however perceive Korean restaurants in Koreatown as the most authentic Korean places in the city, often based on what they understand as the “ethnic enclave” in the U.S. context
-- a space for exotic but authentic ethnic culture, established and operated by immigrants. When I filtered 1,741 reviews by the word “authentic,” 105 reviews showed up.

You can tell that this spot is authentic with the amount of Korean people here, even though I naturally get dubious when I see "authentic" in the title of the resto
-Pallavi P., Black female, reviewed on July 15, 2015

I figured this place would be really good and authentic since almost every person in the restaurant was Korean.
-Kyle R. White male, reviewed on October 23, 2013

Although non-Korean diners’ understanding of “authentic” Korean food varies, Pallavi P and Kyle R. found Woorijip authentic based on a number of Korean customers.

Korean nationals do not necessarily point to Woorijip as authentic yet continue to eat there. However, the context is differently understood by online based prosumers, who are convinced of the restaurant’s authenticity by the presence of Koreans. These positive reviews with markers such as “authentic” and “home cook style” entice locals and tourists to venture into unfamiliar cuisines (Zukin, Lindeman and Hurson 2015).

**Koreatown as a hip and/or alternative space**

Omnivores in New York City might still distinguish themselves from the general public because of their wider range of knowledge on authentic and exotic foods. They may dine at high-end fusion Korean restaurants run by leading chefs: Jungsik by Jungsik Lim, or Danji by Hooni Kim. The number of Korean restaurants outside the Korean ethnic enclaves is also growing. Yet
for most New Yorkers, Koreatown offers “authentic” and “exotic” flavors that represent the “Taste of Korea.”

For some non-Koreans, particularly *Hallyu* fans, Koreatown is not just an eat-and-go space. Rather, non-Koreans see Manhattan’s Koreatown as a fun space in which to become immersed in Korean culture and “authentic” Korean food. Unlike Korean nationals, who often complain about Koreatown’s appearance, the non-Koreans I interviewed rarely spoke of it negatively in that sense, focusing on its novelty and exoticness.

The first time I felt like *I was a tourist in a new place* was in Korea[town]. I felt that it was a part of Korea sent here to the States and learning to walk through the block itself was like going to a different country. And I really felt that I liked being in a new place.

-Pablo, a 21-year-old college student, Mexican American

For Pablo, Koreatown was authentic and exotic, a place to “step out of my own culture and... learn something new.” Born and raised in New York City, Pablo distanced himself somewhat from his ethnic cohort, and has established new ties with Asians, particularly Koreans. Because he often hears his Korean friends grumble about Koreatown’s food for not being authentic or tasting awful, he reimagines Koreatown -- “it might not be authentic” -- yet his experience with Korean culture through the media and Koreans living in New York City creates a sense that “every time I go there I can have a taste of Korea.”

The notion of exoticness and authenticity of Koreatown is often interpreted by non-Koreans according to comparison with their own ethnic enclave. Most of my non-Korean informants, just like the Korean nationals, do not consider their own ethnic spaces particularly satisfactory. Chloe, 23-year-old Chinese graduate student, thinks that Chinatown in Lower
Manhattan is unsafe; Mei, a 30 year-old Taiwanese graduate student, only visits Chinatown “for food or something I have to buy there;” Aiden even thinks that Chinatown smells bad:

Chinatown always *smells like fish.* I think Chinatown is a little bit – no offense to my own people but I think it’s a little dirty. The smell of fish and the streets aren’t very – I haven’t been there for a while but from what I remember it’s just very crowded, the streets are sometimes very dirty.

-Aiden, a 21-year-old college student, Chinese American

Ram, a 32-year-old ethnic Chinese Burmese, and Kaylee, a 21-year-old-Chinese American college student, echo Aiden. Ram says that “in Chinatown, you’re like –[in the] fish [market]... But Chinatown is outdoors.– it’s on the sidewalk also wet and all this. Kind of dirty.” Kaylee complains that “in Chinatown you go in and people are rude and the streets are nasty and green and something like that.” They do not consider Chinatown a space for spending casual time in; however, they find Koreatown fun and cool to hang out with their friends.

From my experience last semester I just realized K-town is a good option to me. I mean, in terms of hang out, restaurant, grocery shopping. … I think K-Town is nice and also because I’m from Taipei I really enjoy the kind of quality of the place. I don’t like so many people there but I feel comfortable to be there. … But it’s interesting, many of my Taiwanese friends when they propose somewhere to hangout they usually say, ‘okay, which restaurant in K-town’ and I was surprised many times. …. I think these kind of model of young people hang out is really similar to my life to Taipei…

-Mei, a 30 year-old graduate student, Taiwanese

Mei, who was born and raised in Taipei, does not see Chinatown as reflecting her urban life in Taiwan. She often hangs out in Koreatown, because it brings her nostalgia of Taipei, where she could “enjoy the kind of quality of the place.” Likewise, Brandon, a 34-year-old
Chinese American editor, associates Korean food and Koreatown with the higher status and better quality of life in Hong Kong.

You always go to Chinese restaurants, old style big Chinese restaurants, banquet hall kind of restaurants. And that to me was very boring and traditional, connotation of for colonial city like Hong Kong. Things that are foreign, things that are British, American, Japanese, Korean. That carries with wealth, cosmopolitanism, and also fun for younger kids. That’s I remember distinctly. … It’s like it’s more exciting, more higher class food than we would like.

-Brandon, a 34-year-old book editor, Chinese American

Brandon and Mei, who were born and raised in relatively wealthy countries, feel that Koreatown better resonates their country’s quality of life than Chinatown, despite being categorized as ethnic Chinese. Like Korean nationals who insist that Koreatown does not resonate with a modern and developed Korea, these young ethnic Chinese would agree that Chinatown does not reflect their nation.

Some non-Asian informants also feel this way about their ethnic enclaves. Rocco, a 27-year-old graduate student, is Italian, born and raised in Venice, in northern Italy; he came to New York City for doctoral study two years ago. When I asked him if he sometimes goes to Little Italy for food and grocery shopping, he did not hesitate in criticizing Americanized Italian food.

Either they’re too expensive too but the fact is that they don’t taste like authentic Italian food. And the fact that there were so many Koreans having lunch and dinner there, to me it meant that they have good food. … They start to talk about pasta with meatballs, we don’t have pasta with meatballs in Italy…They’re Italian-Americans or maybe they’re also Italians but we don’t use it...

-Rocco, 27-year-old graduate student, Italian
For Rocco, food in Little Italy does not match the authentic Italian food that he grew up with. It was rather an “American creation” that immigrants or their children have modified over time.

Others associate their ethnic enclaves with stereotypes of their own ethnic groups. Lucia, a 20-year-old Dominican college student, immigrated at age five to a Dominican neighborhood of Harlem where she still lives, but she does not want to hang out in Harlem or Washington Heights. Likewise, Aria, a 21-year-old college student who now lives in midtown Manhattan with her family, hardly travels to Washington Heights or Harlem to eat out at a restaurant or hang out with her friends.

We make Dominican food at home, we don’t like -- that’s the thing about Dominicans, every family thinks that their own food is better than other peoples. And when we go to Dominican restaurants we’ve gone, it’s just not that great, it’s not that good and I don’t want to waste money. It’s really like greasy, Dominican food. So my moms’ because it’s not greasy, it’s not at all.

-Aria, a 21-year-old college student, Dominican American

As Aria explains, she has “her mom [to cook]” Dominican food for her and her siblings. Or, like Mila, a 25-year-old graduate student, some would not travel “partly because a lot of the stuff I could just make it home.”

Most of my non-Korean informants regularly bring their family and friends to Koreatown to introduce and share with them the culture they have become engaged in. Rocco once brought an Italian couple to Koreatown, touting it as a hidden, exotic part of New York.
I also bring my Italian friends. Last week there was an Italian couple that are pretty old, they’re [in their] 60s and I brought them to Koreatown to have dinner. Because they asked me where they could go and I don’t want to take them to any Italian place.

-Rocco, 27-year-old graduate student, Italian

During the interview, Rocco did not hesitate to express distrust and antipathy about his own country, partly because of political corruption and certain traditions that he does not fit into; he also does not think of Little Italy as reflecting his Italianness. This complicating feeling about his own culture and country, and as embedded in a form of pseudo-Italianness in New York, leads him to spend more time in Koreatown with Korean friends, and to bring acquaintances to Koreatown, rather than Little Italy.

Brandon shares his thoughts on New York City and why he often brings visiting friends to Koreatown.

You have friends visiting, then you can start introducing them taking them to the places, and I think one of being an Asian American, the top two places I would kind of introduce to my friends or guide them would be Chinatown and Koreatown. Probably two years also, I started going there more often because you began to own [the] neighborhood. ..

-Brandon, a 34-year-old book editor, Chinese American

Brandon recalls the time when he was too busy to check out each neighborhood of New York City. After two years, he found himself comfortable in Chinatown and Koreatown in Manhattan. Unlike other Chinese interviewees, Brandon does not necessarily express any strong negative feelings toward Chinatown; he often visits Chinatown for functional use, and knows it better than any other neighborhood. Yet he says that he would bring his friends from out of town to Koreatown, as “it is easier for Asian Americans to own Asian American neighborhoods [than
other neighborhoods] to think of as you own.” This claiming a form of ownership of Koreatown as Asian American, through cultural consumption, is a way of practicing his pan-Asianness or pan-Asian Americanness.

For my interviewees who do not feel like they fit into their own culture, want to experience something new, and/or have become invested in Korean culture, Koreatown is (re)discoverable as a hip alternative space. Although many of them, particularly people of color and/or children of immigrants, often consider their own ethnic enclaves to be disappointing, they ironically perceive Koreatown as the most authentic Korean space in the city.

**Figure 35. Hallyu Business**

*Photo by the author*

Some business owners quickly respond to new consumers’ needs. As shown in Figure 2, Koryo bookstore, which has operated its business since 1978 (Cho 2013), started to more
actively promote their content related to K-pop music after the recent renovation in 2015. Despite having sold not only books but also K-pop products, such as CDs, posters and DVDs more than a decade, their new signboard confirms that they have enhanced their business strategies in targeting more non-Korean consumers who interested in Korean pop culture.

Likewise, the Born Star Training Center just opened their New York campus on January in 2015, following an Atlanta campus. This is a non-degree training school with ten campuses in Korea, China and the U.S., that trains youngsters who pursue their careers in the entertainment industry. In the U.S. they plan to recruit ethnic Koreans as well as non-Koreans, particularly Asians, who want to pursue their careers in Korea, while recruiting Koreans who hunt the opportunities in Broadway.

Restaurants in Koreatown therefore can no longer target only ethnic Koreans or restrict themselves to word of mouth; they are aware that e-word of mouth is a critical factor in gaining new customers. Now Koreatown entrepreneurs adopt new strategies to respond toward new consumers’ needs, by evaluating and paying more attention the customers’ reviews on Yelp and other sources (Choi and Kwok 2015).

(Re)creating Koreatown

This understanding of quasi-authenticity, often fantasized through the media and rooted in cultural and culinary consumption within the U.S., might wane in South Korea itself, even as experiencing the culture first-hand makes them renegotiate the meaning of Korean culture and Koreatown, as also shown in some Korean Americans’ cases.
Camila, a 22-year-old Brazilian American college student born and raised in New York, resides in New York this semester, although she studies International Relations at college in Florida. Camila got interested in Korea culture during her sophomore year at college, when she was introduced to ESL classes by a Japanese American friend. Camila started teaching English to international students, and it led her to contact with many Asian students, including Koreans; this in turn led her to immerse herself into Korean pop culture. Although she did not realize there was a Koreatown in Manhattan growing up in New York City, she began to spend time there whenever she came back to New York. She even brought Korean friends from college to Koreatown when they visited her in New York.

She visited Korea in July, 2012. Her original plan was to stay in Seoul from August to December as an exchange student. Although she only managed to spend a few days in Korea, because of her father’s sudden death, she remembers that she “fell in love with Korea” while staying in Busan and Seoul. Even that brief visit led her to question whether she might have fantasized the image of Korean culture before visiting Korea.

After I came back from Korea, I realized that K-town is not as beautiful as I thought it was because at first K-town was the only source for Korean things and I thought it had everything there. After going to Korea and coming back it was small and expensive. The smell is not even that good.

-Camila, a 22-year-old college student in Florida, Brazilian American

Camila's image of Korea and Koreatown was reshaped by her brief experience in Korea. Like my Korean American interviewees, whose notion of their motherland is transformed, whether
positively or not, by visiting Korea as young adults, Camila also began to see faults in Koreatown.

Going to K-town is very like New Yorker style. People are screaming each other, but in Korea everyone is eating calmly. Maybe not in Seoul? … There are so many people in Koreatown. So many people. I do not want to say in a mean way, but Korean people in K-town are very stuck up. … Whenever I watch Korean drama, everyone sitting down on the table and homemade meal eating. I’ve never seen that in Koreatown, but going to my friend’s house in Seoul we actually sat down at the table, to me it was very interesting, having rice for the breakfast, you do not do that in K-town, but in Korea it’s normal, rice and soup.

-Camila, a 22-year-old college student in Florida, Brazilian American

Interestingly, Camila now tries to distance herself from regular New Yorkers who have not experienced authentic Korean culture, i.e. in Korea itself. Her trip to Korea seems to give her a new insight into what authentic Korean culture means, in terms of the everyday life of regular Koreans. In this process, the quasi-authenticity of Koreanness as imagined through the media and Koreatown consumption is reevaluated, recreated and renegotiated through direct experience in Korea.

**Conclusion**

This chapter navigates two narratives of Koreatown constructed by non-Koreans; these two stories are rooted either in the growing popularity of Korean pop culture beginning in the mid-2000, or a later trend in Korean food, shaped by media influences. By looking both at transnational and U.S. perspectives, I analyzed several factors leading non-Koreans to Korean pop culture and food, and finally Koreatown. From a transnational perspective, technical
advancements, particularly the internet, have made Korean popular culture accessible where it used to be unknown. In the U.S. perspective, I mostly analyzed Korean food in socio-cultural change within the U.S. territory, although transnational or global flows are intersected in this process. The cultural change, drawn by globalization and new immigrants in post-1965 era, also pushed elites to embrace omnivorousness; in this way, elites who used to enjoy only highbrow culture, now show off a broader range of cultural knowledge, by accepting lowbrow and diverse ethnic cultures. This socio-cultural change has encouraged them to explore Korean cuisine, as an alternative for Japanese and Chinese foods, which already became a part of American palate.

In this way, Koreatown now plays a role as a platform for non-Koreans to first delve into Korean culture in marketplace. Koreatown is understood as the only space where one can adventure Korean culture and food in a physical space, whether authentic or just imagined through the media and their limited experience within the U.S. territory. The South Korean government, which has planned to market its nation through soft-power by explicitly targeting non-Korean New Yorkers, may be satisfied to see an increasing popularity of Korean culture and food and assume that their projects have been successful in New York. They might be partially right: Korean government have invested into several nation branding related projects in the U.S., e.g. globalization of Korean food and Sejong Institute (Korean language education support programs). In transnational perspectives, maybe these growing number of Hallyu fans would be a result of their long-time investment on nation branding with technological development, while the popularity of Korean food past few years would be an outcome of their food project. However, as analyzed in this chapter, I argue that both should be understood as complex socio-cultural negotiation between domestic changes in the U.S. (e.g. new immigration,
commercialized ethnicity, and new cultural trends toward omnivorousness, highlighting authenticity and exoticism) and transnational effects, all redefined in the marketplace in a global economy.
Chapter 8

Conclusion:

Transclave -- an emerging ethnic space

Since the turn of the 20th century, ethnic enclaves and ghettos in the United States have most often been described as segregated spaces, providing jobs and/or accommodations for minority group members and newly arrived immigrants. At the same time, established ethnic enclaves such as Chinatowns, Harlem, or Little Italies, despite the racial prejudice and discrimination against its members, have lured tourists and local residents searching for new and authentic cultural experiences from food to entertainment. The ethnic cultures in the segregated ethnic enclaves or ghettos in general have been perceived as poor but exotic cultures by the mainstream.

A century later, the landscape of ethnic enclaves has shifted. This dissertation sought to show how the new ethnic enclaves I call “transclave” are shaped in the transnational flows of capital, people, culture and public policies. By taking Manhattan’s Koreatown as a model, this dissertation investigated how this new type of ethnic enclave is located in the larger economic, institutional and cultural transformations in this transnational flows between two societies. It also asked how consumers – as transnational actors, in many ways -- in return create and (re)create landscape of Koreatown, thus, emphasizing transnationalism from both above and below.

Transnationalism from above

I considered to how South Korea’s nation branding strategy and cultural policies have shaped the development of Manhattan’s Koreatown as a space for “Seoul-style” consumption. These policies, in the current era of global competition, demonstrate the growing importance of
nations’ “soft-power” (Nye 2005) and require the adaptation of national cultural products to overseas consumer cultures. Because cultural products are often placed in traditional ethnic enclaves, the new branding policies mobilize different types of business owners to create a new “transclave.”

**Nation-state and nation branding**

In South Korea, the financial crisis of 1997 was a turning-point for the government, responding to global changes and overcoming the economic downturn by devising new economic policies. A series of nation branding projects and promotion of new industries, e.g. IT, tourism, cultural content, and food, were aimed at promoting the nation’s positive image, damaged by the crisis, and achieving domestic integration and later marketing the nation as a brand. In this way, the nation-state stepped into globalization as a facilitator through nation branding projects, rather than be constrained by global capital, global political institutions, and global culture.

These strategies are often territorized in Koreatowns across the U.S., because Korean business persons, mostly earlier Korean immigrants, had already established businesses and networks with other local parties. These places represent sites and targets of opportunity for Korean policies of nation branding. Rather than start from scratch, the government was able to collaborate with many transnational entrepreneurs who believed that the projects would help their business. New York City is a major market for the government and transnational corporations; this attracted the government to utilize Koreatown as a stepping-stone for nation
branding projects. Moreover, the location of Koreatown at the heart of midtown Manhattan as tourist zone was ideal for reaching a new consumer group, non-Koreans.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I paid special attention to South Korea’s “globalization of Korean food” project. Several parties, e.g. Korean Food Foundation, Korean franchises, non-profit organizations dealing with Korean issues, and Korean business people in private sector, were involved in the projects. In the “globalization of Korean food” (also called “the first lady project”) the role of Korean entrepreneurs is prominent; by closely collaborating with Korean government agencies, they tried to promote Korean culture and the nation, with the ultimate goal of maximum business profits. Their businesses – mostly food, entertainment, and consumer products – became a means to meet with ordinary consumers from diverse backgrounds.

Local context in New York City

Global economic restructuring has accelerated transnational flows of people, ideas, values, and culture, shifting them further in the direction of a flexible and decentralized system. The growth of the service industry through globalization has accelerated deindustrialization, with the development of producer services for transnational finance capital, specialized production of financial innovation such as banking, accounting, insurance, and legal services in global cities (Sassen 2001). With the ongoing decline of manufacturing in the 1970s and development of new service industries in global cities, city governments began to devise new strategies to beat economic downturns, encouraging the rise of the leisure, shopping, tourism and entertainment industries and develop infrastructure for these new industries (Zukin, 1995, 2010: Hoffman, Fainstein and Judd 2003: Greenberg 2009: Ocejo 2014).
The landscapes of ethnic enclaves in the 21st century also reflect this global economic change. Enclaves still offer jobs and accommodations, and some remain segregated from and marginalized in mainstream society. Yet, what is new -- or, what is newly apparent -- is that many ethnic neighborhoods, like other neighborhoods in global cities, have been reshaped by various forms of consumer culture such as cultural districts and ethnic tourist zones (Zukin 2010: Aytar and Rath 2012).

Coinciding with the rise of the postindustrial city, the influx of new immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia after 1965, the ensuing cultural flows across nations, and Civil Rights movement stimulated numerous shifts in the U.S. racial mosaic. Racial and ethnic diversity became a marketing tool in the 1970s and ‘80s, both for the international and domestic markets; in turn, consumption of ethnicity has become increasingly popular and cool in cosmopolitan cultures in the era of multiculturalism, as culturally anchored in a marketplace (Halter 2007). As cultural trends in the ‘90s transformed from snobbishness to omnivorousness in the service of wide experience (Peterson and Kern 1996; Johnston and Baumann 2014), consuming ethnic cultural products and foods became a key feature of gateway cities where minority groups and immigrants had already established institutions.

**Transnationalism from below**

The term 'transnationalism' was introduced by anthropologists to express “the process by which immigrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational social fields across borders” (Basch, Glick Schiller and
Blanc-Szanton 1994: p6). Immigrants who move across national borders are in turn called “transmigrants” (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1995). Institutional changes both in the U.S and in South Korea, as well as global flows of culture, people and capital, have led individuals from diverse backgrounds – from ethnic Koreans to non-Koreans who seek new cultural opportunities – to (re)create the landscape of Koreatown since the 1980s. In this dissertation, I focused attention on three consumer groups – Korean nationals, Korean Americans (1.5 and later generations), and non-Koreans in their 20s and 30s, plus four Korean American interviewees in their 40s -- assessing how each group understand Korean culture, food, and Koreatown. I also explored their understanding of South Korea’s nation branding projects in New York City, although many of them do not directly associate their activities with these projects.

**Ethnic Koreans**

Korean nationals, temporary residents of New York City (e.g. international students), and the employees of Korean corporations in New York or New Jersey or of American companies, most often depicted Koreatown as “old, dingy, nasty, and feeling like it is in 1970s or ‘80s Seoul.” These temporary residents find that the space reflects the underdeveloped and unmodern past of the nation; they are concerned with “los[ing] face” due to the space creating the wrong impression about “their nation.” They feel that authentic Korean culture has been distorted and misrepresented by Korean business people, who are mostly immigrants, and believe that Korean franchise stores in Koreatown better demonstrate “authentic Korean culture” by replicating the
consumption landscape of Seoul. The nationals’ experience and memories are transmitted
directly from big cites of South Korea, particularly Seoul.

However, they also perceive Koreatown as the only space where Korean-style
consumption, entertainment and leisure are available. Some Korean nationals are directly
involved in nation branding projects, by collaborating with government agencies, Korean
corporations and Koreatown entrepreneurs. Korean Students Associations or other non-profit
organizations have voluntarily organized cultural events to promote Korean culture. More
frequently, Korean nationals are indirectly involved in the nation branding projects by
introducing and transmitting their culture to non-Korean friends and associates. In this way,
Koreatown is reinvented from Korean nationals’ eyes as a space where contemporary Korean
culture may be transferred, preferably without any modifications due to time displacement by
older immigrants.

While Korean nationals understand Koreatown based on their nation’s culture, 1.5 and
later generation Korean Americans do not necessarily recognize South Korea’s direct influence
on Koreatown. Instead, they interpret this space based on a racial/ethnic identity developed as a
racialized minority within the U.S. and through negotiation with the motherland; they often feel
cought between economic assimilation and their persistent racialized minority status in the
dominant culture. Simultaneously, technical developments, South Korea’s economic
modernization, cultural and diasporic policies accelerated by the financial crisis of 1997, and the
popularity of Korean pop culture have led Korean Americans to redefine and reconnect to their
motherland. In this process, Koreatown becomes a place where e.g. memories of ethnic food
primarily found in the home transfer to the commercial space of Koreatown. Here, Korean
Americans can negotiate their relationship with the past through food, and with the present, through food, pop culture and entertainment, confirming the presence of their ethnic culture city-wide or even beyond.

**Non- Koreans**

This dissertation also investigated how non-Korean New Yorkers become connected to Korea’s consumer culture and products through Manhattan’s Koreatown, and subsequently make the landscape more ethnically and racially diverse. Koreatown is an imagined space for enjoying Korean food and consumer products, strongly influenced by both traditional media and new media (i.e. social network services, Youtube, blogs, yelp, local food magazines and food channels). Most of these non-Korean consumers have never been to Korea.

I identified two waves of non-Korean consumers who have flocked to Koreatown in recent years. The first wave began in the mid-2000, when Korean pop culture arrived in Asian/Asian American communities in New York City, driven by the popularity of Korean pop culture in Asia. Its popularity expanded to non-Asian New Yorkers, with various outlets offering Korean pop culture free with English subtitles, but in a very limited fashion. Those K-pop fans began to visit Koreatown because it was the only physical space in which delve into the cultural products and food that they saw in the dramas and TV shows. The second wave slowly emerged in 2010; unlike the first wave, it is based on the institutional and cultural changes in the U.S. rather than transnational forces. The influence of globalization and new immigration post-1965 led middle or higher class Americans to adopt omnivourness, brandishing a wider range of
cultural knowledge, including diverse ethnic culture and cuisine. Korean cuisine, just discovered by these New Yorkers, increasingly became a part of New York’s culinary scene.

Although these newbies do not recognize direct transnational influence in Koreatown by the government, they also contribute to (re)constructing the landscape of Koreatown, as a more racially diverse space than used not to be a decade ago. These non-Korean consumers are the most heavily targeted group by Korean government and corporations, to promote the nation’s image and maximize its potential profits. As consumers, they determine their activities at their own wills and believe that the presented consumer culture in Koreatown should be authentic Korean culture; yet their individual choices are responses, whether intended or not, to transnational flows between the two nations and institutional changes in the U.S. context. In this way, Koreatown, as an ethnic institution in the context of the U.S. racial mosaic, represents not only Korea’s consumption scene, but also multicultural New York within a marketplace.

**A transclave: an ethnic enclave for a global market**

By critically reviewing Manhattan’s Koreatown beyond the traditional ethnic enclave model centered in the ethnic economy and ethnic enclave economy debates in the 1980s and ‘90s, this dissertation brings new relevance to the topic. Although ethnic enclaves were a big topic especially Chicago sociologists, the traditional discourse has fallen out of style with sociologists in the past two decades. Instead, cultural geographers and scholars of urban studies, particularly in European, Canadian, Australian and the U.S. contexts, have focused on and developed the topic by emphasizing new trends in the global economy. I call for an attention by sociologists of
various fields, e.g. urban sociology, immigration, culture, and political economy, in order to analyze a new global urban change.

Unlike previous perspectives on the ethnic enclave economy that saw it as a space of work and/or residence heavily relying on a co-ethnic labor force, the “transclave” is a hyper-commercialized space for leisure and entertainment, not daily living. A transclave is much more ethnically and racially diverse, not limited within co-ethnic boundaries; the ethnically themed leisure, consumption and entertainment opportunities are open not only to co-ethnics but also to non co-ethnic consumers, in what Krase and Lin call an “ethnic theme park” (Krase 1997:p105; Lin 2011). Indeed, non co-ethnic consumers are sought out by city government and local entrepreneurs in pursuit of maximum economic profits, both in the enclave itself and by branding the city as a whole as a diverse and multi-ethnic tourist attraction. This understanding of Koreatown as a transclave extends sociological analysis on ethnic enclaves by highlighting the economy based on consumption, leisure and entertainment opportunities in a global city.

*Nation branding in sociology*

By locating Koreatown within discussions on new ethnic enclaves across the globe, my dissertation introduces discussion of transnational investments by diverse parties from a sending-state, such as Korean government and corporations, in order to attract international investors through positive images of the country. Although this strategy does not guarantee instant profits, nation branding draws potential profits through new economic options such as tourism, consumption and cultural contents. In this way, the term nation branding (or place branding), originally developed in the fields of marketing, communication, and international relations,
needs to be brought to the field of sociology by analyzing the economic and cultural transformation of South Korea as a case study.

Investment in nation branding is common, as seen in various case studies since the late 1990s, but investment in a particular space overseas is under-researched. By taking South Korea’s nation branding project, targeting international markets through economic and cultural policies - particularly food - I suggest a new research topic for scholarly sociological attention. Rather than analyze Koreatown as a unique space, this dissertation has tried to locate the space as a case study within wider global trends developed by various nations. For example, the Thai government has devised the Thai Select program\(^ {173} \) to promote the nation’s culinary culture overseas. The Department of Export Promotion in Thailand grants certification to Thai restaurants across the globe that offer at least 60% ‘authentic’ Thai food on their menus, and imply traditional Thai cooking methods developed in Thailand. Yet in New York, the investment is not limited to an ethnic enclave, but occurs citywide. In fact, although many Thai restaurants are aggregated in Queens’ Woodside and Jackson Heights neighborhoods, the investments are spread widely given the popularity of Thai food across the city.

Likewise, the French government has engaged in promoting French cuisine worldwide. On January 21, 2015, the celebrated chef Alain Ducasse and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development in France launched the project “Goût de France/Good France,” seeking to serve a “French dinner” to the public worldwide. Laurent Fabius, a Foreign Minister of France, said at the presentation,

\(^ {173} \) For more information, visit their website at http://thaiselectusa.info/crud/index.php?home/#.VdZS_U2M2ic
“The Gastronomic meal of the French has been on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 2010, but it is a heritage that should not simply be contemplated, glorified and savoured; it is a heritage that should be built upon and showcased.”

Two months later, 60 French embassies and 1,500 restaurants in 160 countries offered 1,500 dinners to the public in order to celebrate French gastronomy. Like the Korean and Thai governments, the French government understands that the nation’s culture should not be just celebrated, but promoted, branded and marketized to encourage maximum financial profits for the nation.

Like the Goût de France/Good France project, which the government collaborated with local entrepreneurs in French cuisine across the globe, and Globalization of Korean food, some governments work closely with co-ethnic business people. In some cases, these local business people have already constructed their own community in an ethnic enclave. For instance, in Sydney, local Thai entrepreneurs, the Thai consulate, and the Sydney City Council cooperate to separate Thai Town on Campbell Street from Chinatown, as part of an effort to single out and thus more effectively market their ethnic culture to locals and tourists (Ang 2015).

These cases show that the South Korean government’s international projects on Korean food and investments in Koreatown is not a singular case, but rather part of a generalized global trend. This dissertation, thus, suggests a new research topic that sociologists could pay attention.
Research Limitations and Future Research Agenda

Bringing nation branding into local context

Many cultural geographers and urban scholars have considered the emerging type of ethnic enclave as a space for leisure and consumption, and the role of local government in shaping this trend. Particularly in the U.K., where the term “place branding” was created and developed, scholars have pointed out the involvement of local government and their collaborations with local business people in ethnic enclaves (see Shaw 2011). This research trend has extended to other societies in Europe, North America and Australia, where cultural and ethnic diversity becomes another marketing tool in selling the city as a tourist attraction (Collins 2006; Aytar and Rath 2012; Pottie-Sherman 2013; Ang 2015).

In New York, as analyzed in Chapter 1, the traditional ethnic enclaves and ethnic/racial diversity of the city have long been promoted by the city as a tourist attraction, most recently in former mayor Michael Bloomberg’s rebranding strategies for domestic and international investments and the city-wide tourism boom. These polices by the local government, the increasing popularity of NoMad (North of Madison Square Park, close to Koreatown), and urban changes driven by the rise of luxurious boutique hotels and retailers in the neighborhood will likely impact Koreatown considerably over the next decade. This dissertation’s discussion of the local context -- urban policies during the post-fiscal crisis of New York City in the 1970s, and changes in the U.S. racial order due to the post-1965 influx of newcomers – positions the local changes and emergence of the transclave within a global flow of people, capital and culture, particularly highlighting gentrification and 'luxurization' in adjacent neighborhoods. Future research should underscore the possibility for generalization of a new global trend in the ethnic
enclaves of New York and other global cities. For instance, a comparison study on the New York Koreatowns and L.A. Koreatown, or multi-site research on a spectrum of U.S. Koreatowns, will enhance and supplement the questions raised by this dissertation.

**A space for work and/or labor exploitation?**

This dissertation brought ethnic consumption into the discussion of ethnic enclaves, highlighting the role of producers and consumers in the construction of landscape of Koreatown in Manhattan. But as pointed out elsewhere, this is a space for work for some people – particularly Korean and Latino workers -- where newer immigrants seek opportunities for establishing themselves in New York. Koreatown, like other ethnic enclaves, could be a stepping-stone for newer immigrants and ethnic minority groups to incorporate into mainstream U.S. society.

However, behind the glamorous nightlife and numerous consumer opportunities, these workers often have to deal with unfair working conditions and low wages. An owner of Kum Gang San in Manhattan and Flushing, who was the first representative of the Korean Cuisine Globalization Committee of East Coast in the U.S., was accused of violating a series of labor laws in both locations, dating from 2005; New York State found that the Manhattan location underpaid its employees and did not keep proper records (Robbins 2015). In 2011, the New York State Department of Labor found Kum Gang San’s Manhattan location guilty of underpaying $550,973.03 to 66 employees and other violations, and ordered the business to pay about $2 million back to the workers and imposed other penalties – which have gone unpaid (Hong 2014). Despite the state’s investigation, working conditions did not improve; instead, the owner pushed
workers to falsify timecards. In 2012, eleven workers in the Flushing location, both Koreans and Latinos, filed a lawsuit against the owner and managers charging wage theft, alleging that they had been forced to work 18-hour shifts 7 days a week, to attend church on Sunday, and to volunteer in the owner’s garden (Hong 2014). Federal Judge Michael H. Dolinger ruled that the owner and two managers must pay $2.67 million to the workers (Robbins 2015).

It is not clear if Kum Gang San is the only case of wrongful labor practice in Koreatown; certainly, the many reports of labor exploitation on co-ethnics and Latino workers in the service industry (e.g., the boycott of the Upper West Side location of Saigon Grill) suggests that Koreatown is not exempt from illegal labor practices. During my fieldwork, I worked at a TOEFL prep school in Manhattan’s Koreatown, and got paid more (about $12 an hour) for helping Korean students write college applications than most Koreatown workers; yet even I encountered several labor issues. I had to confront the owner over unethical pressure to write (often exaggerated or falsified) statements of purpose for students who had paid about $500 for the service; I had not been hired to do that work. As I refused to perform that specific work, I decided to quit that job that day; at that point, the owner, who had extensive network connections with other business owners, suggested his ability to threaten workers by saying that, despite my bad attitude, he would not spread bad words about me to other Korean businesses. I also learned from a friend who used to work in the state Department of Labor that this is common practice in Koreatown and in other ethnic businesses; although they constantly investigate labor practices in Koreatown businesses, workers – whether Koreans or Latinos – rarely get involved because of their insecure legal status and unstable job security. I have met other Koreatown employees through my personal network -- work and the non-profit organization where I taught Korean
classes for nine months -- who complained about their working conditions, low wages and unfair treat by owners as well.

Labor practices are not a direct research question in this study; however, each individual’s consumer activities depend highly on the low-wage service workers. Although they often are hidden behind the scene, these workers are also producers of Koreatown, and play a large role in recreating the landscape of Koreatown. It would benefit a comprehensive understanding Koreatown as a whole to see more research on labor practices there.

**Who claims authentic Korean culture?**

In my interviews with Korean nationals (Koreans citizens), they often confirm that “we,” Koreans, define authentic Korean culture -- most notably in contrast with Korean immigrants and their children, who cannot claim personal understanding of the nation’s culture and tastes. 'Authenticity' is one of the most frequently encountered terms when Korean nationals describe Korean culture, particularly food. Although Korean food in New York is marketed as -- and believed by Korean Americans and non-Korean New Yorkers to be -- “authentic Korean food,” Korean nationals believe that authentic Korean food is distorted by Korean immigrants. Yet it is not so clear what ‘authentic’ Korean culture means.

The conflict over “authenticity” between Korean nationals and Koreatown entrepreneurs leads to other questions. Is there conflict over the space among different consumer groups, e.g. between Korean Americans and Korean nationals, or Korean Americans and non-Koreans? Are there any racial concerns arising from the presence of non-Korean consumers in what might be considered a space exclusive to Korean nationals and Korean Americans? Some might perceive
their space as being invaded; others might enjoy and take pride in the new attention paid to their national culture. Koreatown is reconstructed by Korean nationals as separate from and often not communicating with the preexisting Korean culture reshaped by immigrants and their children; likewise, Korean national and Korean American groups coexist in New York, but rarely communicate with each other, in the sense that they are clear in their expression of cultural difference. As part of a larger project, during interviews with Korean Americans I intentionally mentioned how Korean nationals describe Koreatown as a dirty and dingy space; although the reactions were not verbal, I could observe from their facial expressions--and a certain amount of speechlessness--that most of them were offended, due to their emotional and symbolic connections to the space. At the same time, Korean nationals often question that their Korean-American counterparts do not sufficiently deliver authentic Korean culture. In this case, Koreatown became a battlefield for claiming cultural authenticity, although most Korean nationals eventually leave New York.
Appendix 1: Methodological notes

Research development process, recruit and reflection

*Korean nationals and shared stories*

On August, 2007, I arrived at John F. Kennedy Airport from Korea. I was met by a friend of mine, and headed to my temporary accommodation in Queens -- a Korean version of Airbnb or a guesthouse, owned by a Korean woman in her 60s who had immigrated in the 1970s. As soon as I put down my two giant black baggage with rolling wheels (so-called “immigration bags”), I was taken to Manhattan’s Koreatown by my friend, who had come to New York a year earlier. It was in many ways a typical Korean “moving day”: I opened a cell phone account at a Korean-owned cell phone store despite not having a permanent address; we ate Chinese food at Korean-Chinese restaurant (Koreans in Korea commonly have Korean-style Chinese food delivered to a new house on a moving day). I had lived in a small town in the U.K. for a year, four years earlier, but New York seemed so different; the existence of Koreatown itself was a new experience, and I was surprised to see these Korean stores, and their mixture of Korean and English languages. It seemed to me that I was in Seoul, but a very outdated part of Seoul -- possibly Seoul in the 1980s.

My dissertation project unofficially began that day. I still remember that my friend told me, “you will come back soon and spend much time here,” while showing Koreatown to me. In turn, over the past eight years, I have brought many visiting or newly-arrived Korean friends to Koreatown, introducing them the grocery stores, phone shops, and bakeries. I worked there too, and developed my own feeling about the space: as my cultural space for consumption and
entertainment, a workplace, and most importantly a research site. I hated that space, but I liked that space. As my friend warned me, I spent much time there, not only because it is only two blocks away from the Graduate Center, but also because it resonates with my hometown, Seoul. As I talked to my 34 Korean interviewees, I learned that my story is a part of a collective history of our culture. Whether or not each of us sees what is behind the physical landscape, whether or not we believe that we belong here, we all share our past with the space.

**Race, ethnicity, and Korean Americans**

My academic interest in Koreatown naturally developed over time. I came to think that the space was interesting enough for a class project in an “urban research seminar,” taught by Professor Zukin, during my second semester at the Graduate Center (in 2008). Although I began to read the history of Korean immigration and Koreatown, my observations were limited to the experiences of my fellow F.O.Bs (Fresh off the Boat) as consumers, and immigrant entrepreneurs as producers. I strongly believed back then that most consumers in Manhattan’s Koreatown were temporary residents, e.g. international students, and staff at Korean corporations’ New York or New Jersey branches.

Coincidentally, a new opportunity came in March 2008, while working on this class project. A friend suggested that I teach Korean classes for her Korean American grassroots organization. The other teachers were all enthusiastic about Korean language education, and actively engaged in political movements to varying degrees; they believed in the important of bridging generations in the Korean community and (re)connecting Korean Americans to their homeland. Our two Korean classes took place in a small class room in midtown Manhattan, very
close to Koreatown; I taught an intermediate Korean class. Most of my students were second
generation Korean Americans in their late 20s and the early 30s and adoptees, plus a few non-
Koreans. They wanted to (re)connect to Korea for various reasons. They really wanted to learn
Korean language and culture, but hadn’t been given the opportunity growing up. They talked
about Korean pop culture a lot. They wanted to communicate with their parents and relatives.
At the same time, I was participating in the organization’s meetings, extending my experience
and understanding beyond the classroom. The members were progressive Korean Americans –
1.5 and later generation Korean Americans, and a few Korean nationals. Most were very well-
educated and had professional jobs. I was surprised that people in the organization had worked
with Korean organizations in Korea, and actively discussed issues in the Korean peninsula; yet I
also did not understand why they cared about such things.

In retrospect, I never was interested in race and ethnicity while living in Korea, basically
because I was in the mainstream in the Korean racial order, strongly mythologized as a
homogeneous society. Until the 1990s, I rarely saw foreigners in Seoul, except for some parts of
Yongsan, where the U.S. military base was located, or Hannam-dong, where foreign diplomats
lived. Yet after the 1997 financial crisis, the South Korean government began to recruit foreign
workers for manufacturing jobs, and Joseonjok (Korean Chinese) in low-paying service jobs
(this is briefly discussed in Chapters 2 and 6). Similarly, in the early 2000s, South Korea began
to import young foreign brides for old bachelors in the countryside; I here use a word “import”
because many people treated these women, mostly from Vietnam, the Philippines and China, just
like products. I resented Koreans who commodified these women’s bodies, resented the Korean
factory owners who abused and exploited migrant workers, resented the Korean citizens who
saw them as inferior while treating white Americans and Europeans as superior beings. But I never thought of these things as a part of me, as something I was part of. Indeed, as a college Sociology major, I was more interested in class issues and urban poverty; I had worked as a volunteer teacher for children in public housing for three years, and later wrote a master’s thesis on that issue.

The NYC organization was therefore eye-opening. Belong to the mainstream racial profile in South Korea, I was ignorant on racial issues. I even committed microaggressions against fellow Koreans without understanding what they were: I vividly remember a day in 2008 when I told one of my second generation friends that she spoke very good English; I did not mean to offend her, and had no idea what that kind of statement would mean to Korean Americans dealing with issues of being perceived as forever foreigners. My friends politicized me about racial issues in the eyes of Asians/Asian Americans, and I began to learn about terms, e.g. White America, foreignness, honorable whiteness, and the Third World Movement. Through this process, I also became aware of, and put a name to, the unpleasant incidents that I encountered because of my race, ethnicity and gender in various settings. More importantly, it allowed me to better understand why my interviewees burst into tears or resentment while talking about their racial and ethnic identities.

**Korean classes and non-Koreans**

My project expanded through my teaching at CUNY and non-profit organizations. I ceased to teach Korean at the non-profit organization in 2009, but had thought that it would be great to continue teaching somewhere else; beyond observation, I hoped to recruit some students
for in-depth interviews. I got a teaching job at an urban community college in New York City, where a Korean class was being introduced because of the increasing popularity of Korean pop culture.

The first day was a big surprise. From my experience as a teacher in the first organization, I expected to have more heritage learning students. Who would bother to take a class on Saturday morning, starting at 10:00 A.M for three hours? The enrollment in the class was high—overcapped, even. I had some adult students taking classes not for a credit but for their own interest; I only had three Korean American students (out of 21 in the class). I had students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds: Asian/Asian Americans – almost half of my students were of Asian descent-- as well as White, Black and Latino/a students. They were all enthusiastic about K-pop and K-drama; they knew Korean pop culture better than I did, and I had to push myself to learn more about Korean pop culture in order to communicate with them. I incorporated many pop culture related materials into my class and had casual conversations with my students about their experience with Korean culture and Koreatown. I taught there until Spring 2011, and returned for the Spring 2013 semester.

My intensive fieldwork began in April 2012 and continued until September 2013. I asked my former students if they would participate in my project; I also asked friends if they know anyone who might be interested in talking to me. I posted and sent research advertisements to random organizations; I emailed the Korean Students Associations at New York City’s colleges, non-profit organizations, and a listserv of a website sharing information about Korean culture. In addition to conducting semi-structured interviews with various people in Koreatown, I worked in Koreatown itself to gain a deeper understanding and an insider’s perspective, consulting Korean
nationals at a TOEFL school for 20 hours a week between June and December 2012. I taught at a second non-profit organization from January 2013 to September 2013.

These intensive participant observations allowed me to interact directly with various Koreans, from business people to workers and consumers. I was introduced to a chair of the 32nd Street Business District by the wife of the owner of TOEFL School. Although workers, whether Koreans or Latinos, were not a part of my research questions, I got important context on Korean businesses in Koreatown in terms of labor practices and employment. Most importantly, I was able to hear the gossips and behind-the-scenes stories about Koreatown business and history.

Research Ethics

A teacher and students

Because I initially developed my project as a teacher, it was not always easy for me to separate my role as a researcher. Eleven Korean Americans and eleven non-Korean interviewees were recruited during my Korean classes; the other interviewees were recruited from research ads or through my personal network.

The settings in which I taught were very different. My Korean classes at the community college were a very formal setting, although less so than sociology classes I taught at other colleges. Students took classes both out of general interest and for foreign language requirements. I was much older than my students, most of whom were in their early 20s, and was called a professor or sunsaengnim (a teacher in Korean). To avoid ethical issues and IRB protocol violation, and to protect my interviewees, I only asked former students to take part in
my research after I left the school in 2011; all the interviews with my former students at the community college were conducted in 2012.

The other two organizations at which I taught were quite different. While I had few high school and college students in my Korean classes, most were in their 20s, 30s, or occasionally older. This allowed me to build friendships with them; some asked me to meet outside of class for drinks or coffee, which I occasionally accepted, or to hang out with them as a friend. My role as a teacher did not restrict me from freely communicating with them or them from approaching me as friends. Later I invited some to interview with me.

Although my former students from the community college talked frankly about their thoughts on Korean culture and Korean people, I often had the impression that they were emphasizing positives because of my Koreanness. I sometimes tried to incorporate socio-cultural and political issues into my class, because my students wanted to learn about Korea, not just the language itself. Yet some students did not want to talk about negative aspects of Korea, even during interviews later. Maybe the hierarchy created some gaps that left them feeling unable to criticize my culture, or some of them were fantasizing about the country and culture and did not want to look at it critically.

In multiple class settings, I met male students who openly showed sexual interest in Korean women; a few even attempted to pursue me in this context. This was confusing: are they so-called fetishists, or just interested in Korean culture? Is there a clear boundary between the two? I distinctly remember the day I had a formal interview with one of my former students. When I taught him, he was a shy, polite and hardworking student, but when I asked how and why
he became interested in Korean culture, he kept talking about two Korean women he was obviously interested in sexually. I grew very uncomfortable during this interview.

It was hard for me to deal with such situations due to the different social roles I had: I was a Korean language teacher who wanted to introduce my culture to others; I was also a sociologist who was very critical about gender dynamics and racial issues. Many had not paid attention to what I was studying, although I was clear about my research. Should I let it go as a researcher, because I would presumably benefit from this situation? Or should I stop male students from approaching me or flirting with me? In sociology classes, I developed strategies to deal with some students’ behavior; these strategies to change for the Korean classes, as I wanted to avoid being overly “teacherly” or nitpicky. I often let these things go in favor of observing the behavior, such as with the student who discussed his interest in two Korean women.

*Ethnicity and nationality*

Of the four groups of producers and consumers in my sample, Korean Americans were the most challenging group for me to work with. As a Korean born and raised in South Korea, I share many cultural memories with Korean nationals; it was not hard for me to recruit Korean nationals as they were willing to help me out, even in random situations. Most of these interviews went well. My network was far more limited with Korean Americans; despite my intensive teaching experience and personal networks, it was difficult to recruit 30 Korean Americans. Furthermore, I was asking them much more sensitive and longer questions than those I asked Korean nationals, including questions about their experience with racial discrimination and violence. Their average interview time was longer -- 1.5 hours compared with one hour for
Korean nationals; the longest interview lasted two hours. In retrospect, these interviews were very difficult for me; I became very emotionally involved while talking to my Korean American interviewees.

I shared my personal experiences with racialization during interviews, particularly with female interviewees, with whom I shared the experience of being racialized and sexualized in this country. I have encountered people who followed me, called me 'cute dumpling' or 'China doll', and even touched my body on the street. I also have dealt with people who were well-intentioned enough, but very ignorant in their comments. I used these experiences as an opening to talk about my interviewees' experiences with racial discrimination and microaggressions.

Typically, I used this story: One day, I was trying to figure out which bus I should take to get to my friends’ house in New Jersey at Port Authority Bus Terminal. The express and local bus numbers were complicated, so I asked a man on line if I was waiting for the right bus. He kindly explained the system to me and advised me to talk with the staff upstairs. I said thank you to him, to which he responded—smiling—“say 'excuse me' when you pass people.” I was talking to him in English; I was in my fourth year of my teaching at college; I was highly educated. Yet this social background did not count in the face of this man's presumption of my automatically lower status as an Asian woman speaking with an accent.

This story resonated with my Korean American interviewees, prompting them to share their own experiences. Yet while I was able to establish a rapport of shared experiences with the Korean American participants, it would be incorrect to say that I fully understood their pain. Some of interviewees told me that they rarely met Korean nationals who understood the U.S. racial politics; two burst into tears while talking about racial issues and their memories. Such
traumatic racial experiences have not been part of my life. As part of a racial/ethnic majority, a sociology student whose primary research agenda centered at urban poverty, and a voluntary teacher in Seoul’s public housing, I was focused on class issues in South Korea. As a young woman, gender inequality and the age hierarchy in Korea also concerned me greatly. But had no basis with which to imagine how hard it was for these Korean Americans to deal with the Otherness placed on them.

Nationality also played a role during the interviews. Korean nationals did not mind talking about Koreatown negatively, and downright disparagingly. They were very straightforward with me, knowing that I was a Korean national, and perhaps shared their feelings about Korean immigrants and Koreatown. A few were patriotic and nationalistic, expressing confidence in the ascending popularity of Korean culture and food. I did not necessarily agree with them, but I did not share my thoughts, and masked my reactions.

Conversely, many of the Korean Americans were reluctant to share their thoughts and feelings with me about their experiences with Korea and Korean nationals. As a scholar of Asian American studies and a Korean teacher, who shared racial status with them and/or tried to understand the U.S. racial politics, Korean American interviewees openly talked about the micro-aggression they have dealt with, which enabled me to collect very interesting data. To overcome the nationality barrier, I often began to criticize aspects of Korean culture that they did not understand; this sometimes worked, but not always. As a researcher, I often felt that I had limitations on these particular questions due to our different citizenships, cultural backgrounds, and the frustrations each group felt with the other. I likely would have had some different responses if I had interviewed Korean Americans as a Korean American.
A question on financial reward

Despite the challenges of collecting these interviews, I know that I was very fortunate to meet with these individuals and to hear their stories. They did not mind spending an hour or two hours with me without any economic benefit. All the interviews that I conducted were voluntary. I clearly stated that there would be no financial remuneration for participating; nonetheless, as a gesture of appreciation, I gave them small gifts that I brought from Korea and paid for coffee, tea, and desserts that we had during the interviews.

Although there would be some advantages to paying people for participating, I decided to make this research voluntary for several reasons. First, I simply did not have funding with which to compensate interviewees. More importantly however, as many researchers have pointed out, the issue of power relations between interviewer and interviewee is distorted by payment. I already had particular power dynamic with my former students, despite the fact that I approached them after I left the school. Payment would compensate for the power relation, but at the same time increase the possibility of bias on questions, driving the informants to favor my intentions. Instead, I made more efforts to build rapport with them. People are frequently more willing to participate if they know the researcher. Although I did intensive interviews in 2012, I had known many participants for years through the organizations and Korean classes, which voluntarily encouraged them to introduce their friends who were qualified for their interviews. A few even wanted to treat me for my coffee and desserts during interviews.

Surprisingly, I was able to recruit 111 individuals without compensation in New York City and in Seoul. This dissertation, in fact, is thus a result of collaborations with these 111 volunteers, who shared their experiences, visions and agendas, and often their feelings with me.
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