

EUI Group Project

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Title: Korean and Korean American Students' Friendships at the University of Illinois At Urbana-Champaign

About the Authors:

Jane:

I am a senior at the University of Illinois studying Human Development and Family Studies with a concentration in Child and Adolescent Development. I am a second generation Korean-American who does not really know much about the Korean culture. I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago in a predominantly Caucasian neighborhood and had friends that were all white. When I came to college I became a member of the Greek system, which is also predominantly white. Still, all of my friends are Caucasian. Personally, I have my own reasons as to why I do not tend to form friendships with Korean international students, and it was interesting to see if my thoughts held true for other Korean Americans as well.

Min Soo:

Author's name is Minsoo Kim, and he is sophomore Korean international student at University of Illinois in Urbana Champaign and his major is Global Studies. His ethnic background is basically Korean, and his family is consisted of four members, father, mother, and younger brother. He had lived in Singapore for one year when he was in middle school, and he moved to the Philippines for three and half years until he graduates high school. He speaks Korean for Native language and speaks three other languages which are English, Chinese and Japanese. He is very familiar with Asian cultures since he lived in Asian countries for rest of his life. He enjoys living in Illinois with new people, and he is looking forward to learn more about this country.

Jackie:

I am currently a senior at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, majoring in psychology and sociology and minoring in Asian American studies. I was born in America, and am of Irish and Polish descent, though I have never traveled out of the country. For as long as I can remember, I have enjoyed meeting people of different backgrounds than my own and learning about their different experiences and perspectives.

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Keywords:

Korean, friendships, university, students, Asian American

Abstract:

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At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, over 1,000 Korean international students are on campus and there are significant numbers of student organizations which serve both Korean and Korean American students. This study examines the relationships between two groups of students on campus, Korean-born and American-born Koreans, by analyzing observations of public events and interviews with members of both groups. The findings indicate that students tend to befriend people in their own group because of perceived commonalities. Furthermore, the University plays a large role in how and where students befriend others and who students become friends with.

Question: The focus of our research will be on Korean American students and Korean international students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Specifically, we are looking at if/how these two groups interact, whether or not they voluntarily attend the same events, and their reasons behind why or why not. We would also like to examine the role, if any, the University takes to facilitate a relationship between these two groups of students.

Plan: We plan to answer the above questions by conducting observations and interviews. Specifically, we plan to observe at Korean affiliated Registered Student Organizations, such as the Korean Students Association, possibly the Korean Cultural Center, and at student events and activities put on by Korean religious institutions in the community. Our group has not yet decided how to split up the observations (like whether we will have one group member researcher observe one event/club or have each researcher attend each event and observe). As for interviews, we plan to interview between 6-8 UIUC students, with half being Korean American students and half being Korean international students. Lastly, we plan to examine the University's role in these two student groups' relationship by observing the Cosmopolitan Club, an international University sponsored group on campus, and by interviewing a University employee whose job involves international students, such as a dean or advisor.

Data (observations):

[Cut and paste all observations completed by each of your group members here with the name of the member on top.]

Jane Kim:

For my data observation, I looked at the websites of two different student organizations here on the campus at the University of Illinois. I observed and analyzed the websites of the Korean Cultural Center (KCC) and the Korean Student Association (KSA).

The first notable point to acknowledge about each site is the language that is used. As soon as you enter the KCC site, it gives you an option of English, or Korean. The English and Korean versions have similar content; however the Korean one has a bit more information. There is an extra tab at the top of the site in the Korean one that says columns where as the English version does not have this. I could not determine what the information in this section says because of the language barrier. Both versions of the site have a tabs that take you to different parts of the website such as various activities, events, programs and workshops. When looking at the appearance of the site and comparing the two, it is notably different. The one in English has more pictures on the page.

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KSA's website is written mostly in Korean. The different tabs and links of the site as well as the "about us" section are written both in Korean and English, however the rest of the content is written all in Korean. The only way for a viewer to possibly understand the content is if they were fluent in Korean. There is no way for someone who knows how to read a few words could comprehend the material. It was difficult for me to know what I was looking at because I am not very good at reading Korean. There is a section on the website called life in the UIUC. This section is all written in Korean so it is obviously there to help out students that are foreign born. This site was meant mostly for foreign born Koreans and maybe domestic born Koreans that are knowledgeable in the written language.

It was quite challenging for me to look the websites and form comparisons and properly analyze the content that each contained. I can sort of read Korean but reading the material on the sites would probably take me days because I am so slow at it! I would probably not be able to understand most of it as well. There are notable differences in the website of each different RSO, but by specifically looking at just these two particular ones, it seems to be more advantageous to be foreign born.

Minsoo Kim:

On Tuesday, October 27th, 2009, through 12pm to 1pm, I and my group members attended a lecture at Asian American Cultural Center about "1.5 Generation Asian American Adolescents" by Hee Kyong Pyon. When we first arrived, there were many people wandering around the place. The first thing that caught my eyes was the food. Since the food was absolutely free for everyone who attends the event, we could also enjoy the Japanese food. The lecture started and the lecturer started to speak. Lecturer was Korean woman and she spoke fluent English, so it was easy to understand. The lecture was not that long, but it was pretty impressive, because the issues were open to everyone and it was pretty general. However, the room was too small and too many people were sitting in that small place, so it was kind of interrupted me to focus on the lecture. After the lecture, she asked her questions to the lecture. Some people raised their hands and shared their stories and thoughts. Some were pretty agreeable, while some people were not. Since the topic was pretty much open to everyone, it was good time to hear other people's voices. Various people from various places attended the lecture. I saw some black people, white people, Asian Americans and mixed raced people. However, I feel like I am the only international student in the lecture. I was the only one who really dressed up like "FOB". Therefore, other group members pushed me to share my experiences but I did not. At the end of the lecture, some students passed out their research surveys to fill out, and seems like many researches were going on in this place. At last, we enjoyed the food and the lecture at the same time, and it was very impressive observation for me. In fact, I would like to attend whenever I am free to attend even my research paper is done.

Jackie Larkin:

I attended a lecture that was part of a series of lectures given at the Asian American Cultural Center (AACC) called Food For Thought.

This program consists of the AACC inviting scholars to present their research to UIUC faculty and students, and is free to attend. In addition, a free lunch is served to students. The food is

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usually, though not always, Asian food. Nearly all of the 50 or so (based on estimations) people in attendance ate the food. Additionally, when I looked around, very few people were taking notes, which made me wonder what the main attendance reason was: to eat free food or to listen to a lecture? While free food may have gotten people into the door, it was at times bothersome, because people were constantly getting up to either get more food, throw out their plates, or enter or exit, the room was at times loud and it was hard to hear those talking.

The lecturer focused her lecture on Korean immigrants who belong to the 1.5 generation, which she defined as anyone who immigrated to the US with at least one parent and who is bicultural and bilingual. She told the audience that her research, based on life history interviews, showed that 1.5 generation Korean students had trouble meeting American friends after immigrating, often faced discrimination especially in the school system, and consequently these Korean students tended to become friends with one another. Her research supports the previous findings about Korean immigrant's and Korean Americans desire to hang out with people they feel comfortable with (for example, Kibria 1999). In addition, when she opened up the lecture to audience discussion, audience members of various racial and ethnic backgrounds seemed to agree that they hang out with people who are racially/ethnically like them because they are more comfortable, like this Chinese and White girl who said, 'I don't ever hang out with just White people or just [monoracial] people.'

Throughout the lecture, based on audience members' comments as well as the research presented, I felt everyone seemed to agree that it common for 1.5 generation kids and second generation kids to hang out with only those in the same generation. However, it was only when an Asian American girl said that she thought international students wanted to hang out with only international students that someone disagreed. A person sitting near me mumbled quietly "no they don't," meaning that he believed international students did not want to room with one another, but wanted to room with American kids. This comment makes me think there may be a misunderstanding between the international community and the second generation and higher American community. International students may want to hang out with American students and the American students may just be unaware, or American students, especially of the second generation, may simply be using their lack of knowledge as an excuse to only hang out with other second generation or higher Americans as a way to distance themselves from immigrants. These are topics that our group should explore in our interviews.



Observation Exercise - October 29, 2009

For my observation I went to 'Food for thought: 1.5 Generation Asian American Adolescents' on Tuesday October 27 from 12:00 to 1:00 pm at the Asian American Cultural Center. On this event a presentation were giving by (anonymous). She talked about the 1.5 generation Korean American students who immigrated to the United States during the 1980s and 1990s. In the presentation she not only gave information about the 1.5 generation, but also asked questions. This resulted in a group discussion. As part of this event food was served.

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There were about 40-50 people on this event. Most of them were Asians, a group member told me that most of them were Korean, even though there were some black and white people. I was quite surprised about that, because I thought I would be the only 'outsider' but that was not the cause. I think most of the people did not notice anything about my observation. The room was filled with chairs and in the room was a kitchen where food was prepared. All the chairs were facing to the screen with the PowerPoint presentation. On the chairs there were some papers. On one card you could write your name and e-mail address so you could get more information about events. Another paper was about the evaluation of this event (e.g.; how interesting the topic was, of the speaker was knowledgeable and what do you thought was most interesting).

When people came into the room, they get in line for the food. Behind a counter, two women were serving the food. The food contains rice, kip teriyaki, vegetables and sushi. When people had their food they searched for a chair. Most of the Asians were eating with knife and fork but a few were eating with chopsticks. When the presentation started, most of them were eating but there were also people who just walked in. It was so crowded that some people were standing because there were not any chairs left. People were quiet but they do stand up to get some more food. So people were walking around when the presentation was given. The presentation started with some explanation of definitions and then the presenter asks the audience to talk with each other about some questions. People were talking with each other and I heard only English and no other language. The outcomes were evaluated and people were talking with each other and with the presenter. The atmosphere was easy going. A group discussion was started and people were willing to give their thoughts and opinions about the questions and statements.

As the group discussion continued I noticed that most of the people were leaving the room. This could be because they had class but another reason could be that they were only at the event for free food. I also noticed that four Asians came into the room and left the room with food. They did not listen to the presentation or participated in the discussion. It was clear that they were only at the event for the food. The people who were left in the room really participated in the discussion and this behavior created a good and interesting discussion. The presenter did not mention to fill out the form about the evaluation of the event, so at the end of the presentation most of the people were leaving without filling in the form.

I had the idea that most of the Asians were Asian-American. I did not have the feeling that there were a lot of international students, for example, from Korea. I think these kinds of events are not really promoting themselves around campus. I think most of the people who joined this event are common with events at the Asian American Culture Centre.

Data (interviews):

[Cut and paste all interviews completed by each of your group members here with the name of the member on top.]

Jane Kim:

First Interview:

Steve is a 20-year-old foreign-born Korean student here at the University of Illinois that I interviewed on November 4, 2009. I chose to interview him in order to find out about the various

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activities that he participates in here on campus. I wanted to learn about the types of people he finds himself bonding with and also about the friendships that he has.

The interview started off with a bit of background information on Steve. Both of his parents were born in South Korea and both were in the military. His mother retired a while ago, but his father is currently still in it. Steve came to the U.S. his freshman year of high school. He has always moved around a lot here in America. Now, the only times he goes back to Korea is during his winter and summer break.

Because he still lived in Korea during grade school, his friends were all Korean. When he came to America, he attended a high school in Kansas for a while and then moved to Maine for the remaining semesters of high school. Here, most of his friends were American and very few were Korean.

In college now, Steve has friends that are both Korean and American. "My friends change every year," said Steve, so depending on his schedule and activities, sometimes he hangs out with more with Americans and sometimes more with Koreans. This year he currently hangs out with a lot of Korean people. The Korean friends that he does have are people that were born in Korea. He met most of his Korean friends from his classes, the dorms, and through other friends.

Among the activities that Steve participates in here on campus, he is a part of one RSO here on campus. He is in a club called AIESCC, which is an international student organization that provides international internships. He joined this group because he wants to intern abroad. He did this last year and had a wonderful experience in Ukraine. Steve also occasionally attends religious meetings on campus. He does not have a religion but he sometimes attends Korean church with his friends to meet more people.

"It is easy to find Korean friends here to hang out with," said Steve, he also goes on to explain that there are so many Koreans that come here to study that it is not a problem finding Korean friends. He finds himself bonding more with Koreans rather than Americans. He feels more comfortable speaking in Korean than in English, so being able to freely and expressively communicate is definitely a plus to having Korean friends. When I asked Steve if he has any Korean-American friends he replied by telling me that he has a few but he feels that he is different from them in some ways. He said that his Korean-American friends are "more interested in things that Americans are interested in." He gave me an example of the different taste in cars between the two groups.

As a foreign-born Korean who is fluent in English, Steve finds himself bonding more with foreign-born Koreans. He feels more comfortable speaking Korean and finds that he has similar interests with those that were also foreign born. Most of his friends were met through some kind of school setting either it be classrooms or dorms.

Second Interview:

When walking around campus here at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, one cannot help but to notice the demographics of the student population, specifically the number of Asian students on campus. Asians make up a good proportion of the students that attend this University. Among these students, Koreans are the largest Asian group in this school. If we take a closer look at the Koreans that attend, one would notice a separation between Korean American and Korean international students.

In order to better understand the relationship between Korean American students and Korean international students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I interviewed

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Ken, a Korean American student, to get a better insight into the relationship between these two groups. Looking at this relationship from the perspective of a Korean American student, would be essential to our data and narrative analysis and that is why I met with Ken, outside the Union on Wednesday, November 18, 2009.

The interview began by Ken telling me that he is a second generation Korean that was born in Chicago. Ken grew up in the suburbs of Mount Prospect and Buffalo Grove and comes from an upper class background. As a young child in grade school and middle school, he formed friendships with Caucasian peers, mostly because his school was predominantly populated with white students. As he got into high school he started hanging out with Korean-American people.

When I asked Ken who he hangs out with now in college, he explained that his friends continue to be mostly Korean American and that he only has a few white friends. Ken is not a member of any RSOs or religious organizations on campus. He would prefer to not be a part of any group because he would rather use the extra time he has towards his studies. "I don't hang out with many people but few that I do hang out with are Korean-Americans," Ken explains. The University plays a role in the relationship between these two groups, seeing as how he met most of these friends through classes, other friends, and living arrangements. He currently has two roommates, one Korean American and one white. "I don't really hang out with foreign born Koreans [due to a] language barrier," said Ken as he explained that he does not know how to speak Korean. Another factor that separates Ken from Korean international students is the different culture and lack of shared experience that Ken says, makes them "too different from me." Growing up in America versus growing up in Korea would make you a completely different person because you are immersed in such different cultures. Everything from the type of clothing, mannerisms, behavior, and interests would all be a bit dissimilar.

After this interview, I was able to conclude that language and a commonality of interests separates a Korean American, like Ken, from forming friendships with Korean international students. Ken finds himself being able to easily form bonds with other Korean American students because he is more comfortable around them due to the shared language and culture. Ken shows absolutely no animosity for Korean international students, just a mindset that he probably has not too much in common with one.

Minsoo Kim:
First Interview:

Questions for Korean and Korean American Students

1. Where were you born?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Where were your parents and grandparents born?
4. What is your class and racial/ethnic background?
5. What class and racial/ethnic background did your friends growing up in grade school and high school belong to?

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6. How about in college?
7. Are you in any RSOs or groups on campus? If so, which ones? Why do you or do you not join groups?
8. Do you attend any religious meetings on campus? Why or why not?
9. Do you hang out with any Korean or Korean American kids on campus? If so, Which ones, how did you meet them, and where/when do you hang out?
10. Is it easy or hard to find Korean and Korean American friends to hang out with?
11. Do you want to hang out with Korean American kids? What about American kids?

There are various ways of interviewing a person as a research object. Sometimes, interviewee forces interviewer to speak out with the exact same answers which he or she wanted to hear, and this skill often makes the research easier to process. However, this time, I decided to be more comfortable with interviewer to encourage him to speak more sensationally and truly. Also, I did not tell him about my research topic to avoid him making up different answers.

November fourth, 2009 around 5pm at ISR (Illinois Street Residence Hall) My interviewer is now in sophomore year in college, and he has a Korean ethnic background without monetary difficulties. He was born in Korea and raised in Korea until he moved to Japan for one year when he was in fifth grade in elementary school. After that, he came back to Korea and went to Korean public school until first year of highschool and finally moved to Land O'lakes, Wisconsin, United States of America. Since he spent most of his life in Korea, his ethnic background was fully Korean. Interviewer had enjoyed his highschool life in Wisconsin even though his classmates were not as rich as his friends in Seoul. During the interview, he talks very seriously, but could not eye contact with me (Koreans avoid looking at one's eyes when they are speaking, because sometimes it is considered rude).

For the next question about the ethnic groups, he said that he never join any RSOs on campus, since he has not enough time to spend on group activities. The reason of being too busy recently is academic reason that he is in Computer Engineering major and so many exams and quizzes are going these days. However, he was joining Korean religious group. The reason that he was attending the church services every weekends was that he value his religion as a christian. I felt he is a very religious person.

His college life was pretty simple. He likes to spend time at Gym for workout. However, his friends were mostly International students from Korea, so called FOBs, and only few Korean Americans were hanging out with him. Many of his friends go to same church with him, and just few Korean Americans were introduced to him by his friends. Also, he said it is easy to find Korean and Korean American friends to hang out with, and the reason was because there are so many Koreans on this campus and even in his dorm. For the last question, he answered "Yes" because he has open mind to everyone, and he thinks that even Korean Americans are Koreans and feels like brothers and sisters. Also, he was happy to hang out with American kids since he

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wants to learn more American cultures and to practice English for his good. It seems like pretty obvious for him to answer like this, but it was very understandable.

The interview was done, and we talked more about Korean churches on this campus, and the religions. I guess he is still a super FOB like me, but he has open mind to accept any cultures to learn.

Second Interview:

It is always important to make the interviewee comfortable to get honest answers from the questions. I have never thought about these questions from Asian American's point of view. This time I decided to interview a guy who has lived in America most of his life.

November eighteenth, 2009 around 9pm at ISR (Illinois Street Residence Hall), Andy is now in sophomore year in college and he is considered as Asian American so called "Twinkies" among Korean community. He was born in Chicago in 1990, and he has been living together with his family in Illinois for his entire life. He is a second generation Asian American kid. I have thought it was pretty interesting that he is very open to Korean "FOB" (Fresh off the boat) culture. He had plenty of international friends. He was fluent in both Korean and English. According to his interview, he was used to Asian cultures since his racial background was mostly Koreans, and he was grown up with wealthy family and surroundings. Until he becomes a college student, his friends were in similar ethnic background with him. Even in college, his friends have no monetary problems with them because his friends are mostly international students. At this point, I was impressed about the fact that he has many international students even though he has totally grown up in America. In our research paper, we see the differences between Asian Americans and international students. However, his case was little bit off the result that I have made before. I would think that Asian Americans do not like to hang out with international students, but Andy was preferred to hang out with international students. It might have seemed like he just want to get used to Korean cultures. On the other hand, he was still joining Asian American church groups. He meets as a group on every Fridays, but not the other RSO's.

Overall, I had a hard time to figure out which groups he belongs to. Mostly, Asian Americans prefer to flock together with themselves, and also international students prefer to flock together with themselves unless they want to speak more English on campus. In our research paper, we suppose to find out the fact and the reasons, however, according to this interview, there are exceptions or even though Andy was grouped as Asian American culture, he could be considered as just Korean International student. Moreover, I think the standard that divides people into those two groups is not the citizenship they have, but the grown background and the way of thinking.

Jackie Larkin:

Since their arrival in the United States in mass numbers beginning in the mid- 19th century, Asian immigrants and their descendents have been treated as perpetual foreigners, which resulted in discrimination against them. This still holds true for Korean Americans in present day US (Zhou 2004; Lee, 1996; Kibria, 1999). In an attempt to avoid appearing like a foreign-born Asian, and to avoid the discrimination associated with the status, researchers argue that Korean Americans of the second generation reject associating with first generation Korean

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immigrants to America, who earned the nickname FOB, or fresh off the boat, for their characteristically un-American habits and mannerisms (Kibria, 1999). Some Asian American groups have even gone as far as committing violence against foreign-born members of their shared ethnic ancestry (US News and Report, 1966). Additionally, like other Asian ethnicities, Korean Americans find that they have more in common with other Korean Americans than they do with recently arrived Koreans in America and so avoid them (US News and Report, 1966; Kibria, 1999; Kim, 2004).

In order to see if this trend holds true at the UIUC campus, I interviewed a Korean American student, Joe*. Joe does not fit neatly into our classification of a person being part of either the first or second generation. He was born in Wisconsin and lived in the United States until he was about seven years old, when his family began to alternate living in Korea and the United States for periods lasting approximately one year, which lasted until he moved back to the US during his last years of high school. His birth in the US and subsequent educational years spent in both Korea and the US makes him more of what the Japanese would refer to as Kibei, or a person born outside of Japan who moves back to Japan for their educational years. Like Kibei, Joe does not necessarily identify as first or second generation, but rather “somewhere in the middle...I feel more comfortable in America, but Korea is home.” Joe’s generational status is somewhat ambiguous, but nonetheless his attitude towards associating with Koreans and Korean Americans while he is in America can still be evaluated.

I asked Joe about his friends’ racial and class backgrounds. He responded that in America, his friends in grade school were White and middle class, while in Korea they tended to be Korean and “rich.” His college friends, however, belonged to “mixed” racial and class backgrounds, stating that there are all different types of people at UIUC. However, he did admit that most of his friends were “Asian.” When asked if he hung out with both Korean and Korean Americans and whether or not it was easy to find friends in these two groups to hang out with, Joe responded that it was easy and that he had friends belonging to both groups. He met Koreans through a soccer tournament hosted by the Korean Student Association, a registered student organization (RSO) on campus and that he met most Korean Americans while working out at the Activities and Recreation Center (ARC), a university sponsored work-out facility on campus. He also belonged to another RSO, Asian American Association, where he was able to make other Asian friends.

Joe’s experiences showed that he had both Korean and Korean American friends, and that he seemed to meet both with ease. He did not seem to convey any prejudice against Koreans, despite previous research findings indicating that he may want to identify only with Korean Americans in an attempt to appear more American and less foreign himself. However, this may be due in large part to the fact that because Joe spent extensive amounts of his early life in both Korea and America, he held things in common with both Koreans and Korean Americans, supporting researchers notions that he would tend to seek out people he was comfortable with (US News and Report, 1966; Kibria, 1999; Kim, 2004).

Furthermore, Joe’s ability to associate with both Korean and Korean American students was greatly impacted by the University. Joe stated that he met the majority of his Korean and Korean American friends in RSOs and at the ARC, which are University funded. Additionally, the University allows Korean international students to study at UIUC. The University clearly creates an environment where Korean and Korean American students can meet and interact with each other if they want to, which some students, like Joe, take advantage of.

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*In order to protect the informant's confidentiality, a pseudonym is used in this analysis.

██████████

First Interview:

For my interview I interviewed a girl named Kate* to identify how Korean students act at the UIUC campus and how they feel about their identity. I also looked at if Korean students interact with Korean American students on campus and if they are going to the same events.

The interview was taken in a public place at Sixpack. The interview was about 15 minutes and it was in an informational setting. I started with introducing myself and during the interview I noticed that we laughed quite a lot.

Kate is 21 years old, has a Korean boyfriend and her major is engineering. Her grandparents, parents and she were born in South-Korea. She went to high school in Canada and after that she applied for UIUC. Her family is still living in Seoul, so she was pretty young when she decided to leave her family. In Canada, she went to an international school. There were not a lot of Koreans, so she mainly hanged-out with Canadian. At the UIUC, most of her friends are Korean. At her high school, as well as at the UIUC, her friends are middleclass or upper middleclass. The difference between her Canadian friends at the time and her Korean friends here is that Koreans are going out and, for example, play karaoke. In high school she was hanging out at the park where they just talked. They did not do anything. Kate told me that she felt more American when she was in Canada than she does now. Because she is hanging out with a lot of Koreans at this moment, she is feeling more Korean. When I asked her to describe her identity, she told me that she is Korean but that she adjusted her life to American standards.

Because Kate is in engineering, she told me that she is busy with studying and therefore she is not joining any RSO's on campus. She also told me that she is a bit lazy and that she has enough to do during her week. Groups as KCC or KSA do meet frequently and really get close with each other. She does not have the time for that. Some of her friends do join groups, such as KCC or KSA. She does not join a RSO, but she does join a Korean Church. In the church she has a small study group, but she also meets them outside of the church. These people are her friends, so she is not only talking with them about religion but also about her daily life. When she is going to an event of any of the RSO's, she noticed that Korean and Korean American students interact. Kate told me that it is not hard to find American friends to hang out with, but most of her time she hangs-out with Korean friends. She told me that for most of the Korean students, who came to the United States for the first time for college, it is easier to hang out with other Koreans. There is a cultural difference and it is easier to communicate. She said: *'I cannot really pick out what the difference is, but I know it is there.'* She also said that Korean students need someone to help them adjust here in the city. The difference is quite big, so it is easy to hang out with other Koreans who already studied here. Korean students need someone to help them out, because sometimes they do not speak English very well.

It is important for the UIUC to stimulate RSO's and other events. Kate told me that she met a lot of her friends in church, but she also met them on other events. While Kate is not attending any RSO's, many of her friends do join RSO's so it is important that the UIUC supports these. As mentioned before, international students need other people to adjust at the life on campus. RSO's are a great opportunity to meet new people and to share experiences.

* In this synopsis, another name is used to protect the informant's confidentiality.

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Second Interview:

Extra credit EUI Interview - December 3, 2009

For the EUI archive project the focus of research will be on Korean American students and Korean international students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The interaction between these groups is the focus point, but forming of identity is also important.

For this interview, I interviewed Olivia*. The interview was taken in at the Espresso Royale in the Undergraduate Library. The interview was about 10 minutes and it was in an informational setting.

Olivia is born in Chicago and grew up there until she went to the University of Illinois. Her parents and grandparents were born in South-Korea. When I asked about where Olivia grew up, she told me that she grew up in Chicago but on the other hand she mentioned in the same sentence that she was middleclass. I did not ask from with class she was, but she mentioned it right away. I thought that this was quite interesting because I got the feeling that her 'status' was important for her. She also told me that her friends were middle class.

Most of Olivia's friends are Korean American but she does meet with Americans. Her friends at her high school as well at the University are Korean American or even Korean international/exchange students. With them she speaks mostly English, but sometimes she speaks Korean. If she visits her parents or grandparents or she talks on the phone, she speaks Korean with them. When I asked if she felt more Korean or American, she could not chose and told me that she is Korean American. She grew up in America, knows what every American knows, and she can identify herself with other Americans. On the other hand, she speaks Korean with her family and once in a while with her friends. When I asked her if she look at Korean movies or that she follows the Korean news or that she does something that you would identify with the Korean culture, she told me that she does not do that. I asked her if she knew Korean movie actors and then she laughed at me. She could only come up with one.

I got the feeling that she is more American than Korean, just because she is not really into Korea and the Korean culture. On the other hand, Olivia maybe do not follow the Korean news, she does meet with a lot of Koreans, speak the language, joins a sorority and visit the Korean church. In the Korean church, she talks with a small religious group about religion but also about things in daily life. She is in the church every Friday and Sunday. As mentioned earlier, most of Olivia's friends are Korean American and some Korean or American. She meets with them in church, quad, meet up with them or run into them in class. Because there are so many Korean (American) people on campus it is not hard to find friends to hang out with. Olivia interacts most of the time with Korean international students at church and when they became friends they hang out with each other.

When I asked her why she thinks there is a large Korean or Korean American population at the UIUC, she told me that it is just an easy environment because there is a large population. She told me that *'just because there is a large population, the population gets bigger because you find people with the same background to hang out with. People fallow along, friends tell friends and so on'*.

I asked Olivia of there a culture difference is between Korean students and Korean American students. She reacted with 'absolutely!', but she could not quite explain what the difference exactly was. She talked about the difference in fashion but also about the difference in how people interact and present themselves.

* In this synopsis, another name is used to protect the informant's confidentiality.

Analysis:

In the United States today, Korean Americans are seen as perpetual foreigners and consequently must deal with discriminatory acts against them (Zhou 2004; Lee, 1996; Kibria, 1999). It follows then, that in order to avoid discrimination based on this stereotype, Korean Americans would need to do all that they can to not appear to be foreigners. Researchers argue that this is exactly what Korean Americans do (Kibria, 1999). Specifically, she mentions that they avoid appearing to be “Fresh off the Boat,” commonly referred to as FOBs, who are readily perceived as foreigners due to their speech, actions, and appearance. Kibria mentions that some of these Korean foreign cultural markers are said to include “Asians as group-oriented...obsessed with the display of material goods...not in sync with what is ‘culturally America’...marked by a culture of gender traditionalism” (33). There is such animosity felt by some Asian American groups, for example the Chinese, that some people have committed violent acts against foreign-born members of their same ethnicity (US News and Report, 1966). Not only do Korean Americans not want to appear as foreigners, but researchers also claim that their research shows Korean Americans refrain from hanging out with FOBs who appear to be un-American.

Even if Korean Americans were willing to spend time with or befriend Koreans, they may find they have little to talk about. Previously conducted research indicates that Korean Americans feel these two groups have little to nothing in common (US News and Report, 1966; Kibria, 1999; Kim, 2004). Kibria states that Asian Americans tend to feel they have similar past experiences of discrimination and similar upbringings which give Asian Americans something in common with each other:

“...special ties of [American] Asians. These derived from the commonalities of race and culture among [American] Asians, and the shared experiences and personal histories implied by them...they had experienced certain things-being racially lumped together as “Asian”, and being stereotyped as “nerdy,” “foreign,” and so forth...It was also felt that Asian Americans shared common experiences that derived from the values that had been part of their upbringing” (36).

Kibria’s excerpt exemplifies how the 1.5 and second generation Korean American she interviewed felt about the friendships they made and why they made them in college. Furthermore, these reasons given for how Korean Americans formed their friendships suggested it was a “‘natural’ course of events” (37) to be friends with other Asian Americans, implying friendships with Koreans or other foreign born people would be unnatural, or forced.

To summarize, previous research indicates two different themes. First, Korean Americans distance themselves from foreign born Koreans in order to avoid appearing un-American. Secondly, Korean Americans feel like they have the most in common with other Asian Americans and that it is only “natural” to be friends with other Asian Americans, and therefore are not likely to be friends with Korean students. In order to determine if Korean Americans on campus share these sentiments, an interview with Ken, a second generation Korean American student on campus, was conducted.

When asked about Ken’s friends’ racial backgrounds, Ken indicated that at different points throughout his lifetime he had friends of different backgrounds. “In grade school and middle school, my friends were white...in high school they were Korean American. [Interviewer: In college?] Mostly Korean-American and a few white.” Ken clearly indicated that he had no Korean-born friends. However, this is not because he does not have the opportunity to

meet Koreans and possibly befriend them. When asked “Is it easy or hard to find Korean and Korean American friends to hang out with?” Ken replied “I don’t really hang out with foreign born Koreans [due to a] language barrier... different culture...too different from me.” Ken’s experiences indicate that for him personally, he meets Koreans but does not have Korean friends because of a lack of “common experiences.” Not only does he find himself different than Koreans, but he could not even communicate with them if he wanted to due to a lack of a shared language. His story supports the common experiences theme presented in previous research, but did not support the theme of not associating with Koreans because of an unwillingness to appear as foreign.

How do Korean students attending U of I feel about interacting with Korean American students? To understand who Korean students befriend, how and where they befriend them, and whether or not they find making Korean and Korean and American friends easy, three additional interviews were conducted. Two of the interviewees, Steve and Kate, both pseudonyms, were born in Korea and moved to the United States during high school. The third interviewee, Bob, also a pseudonym, was born in Korea and lived there his whole life, with the exception of one year when he lived in Japan, and is now an international student studying here at the U of I. Because all three of these interviewees spent their first 14 or so years of life in Korea, they are all classified as Koreans for this research.

All three of the Korean-born students said that most of their friends were Korean. Only one person, Bob, the international student, said that his friends were “mostly international students from Korea...and only a few Korean Americans.” This similar pattern of hanging out with Koreans was not reported to be due to a hatred of Korean Americans or an inability to meet them. Bob said that it was “easy to find Korean and Korean American friends to hang out with, and the reason was because there are so many Koreans on this campus and even in his dorm.” Kate too, mentioned that it was not hard for her to find American friends to hang out with, but nevertheless, most of her time she hung out with her Korean friends. She added that for most Korean international students, it is easier for them to hang out with other Koreans because of the cultural differences between Koreans and Americans She said, “I cannot really pick out what the difference is, but I know it is there.” There is also a language barrier for students whose first language is Korean and who feel more comfortable speaking Korean. Kate stated that Korean students need someone to help them out, because sometimes they do not speak English very well. Steve, too, found himself bonding more with Koreans rather than Americans. He felt more comfortable speaking in Korean than in English, so being able to freely and expressively communicate was a positive aspect of having Korean friends.

Like the Korean America students, the statements given by these three Korean-born students indicate that any lack of friendship between these two groups is not due to any ill-will. Rather, it is due to feeling more comfortable with other people born in the same country because of similar cultures and upbringings, and perhaps most importantly, the ability to communicate in one’s preferred language. Consequently, previous research about the theme of having friends with things in common was supported by both Korean and Korean American students.

One student, Joe, that was interviewed for this project did not fit neatly into the classification of Korean American or Korean. Joe was born in America and lived in the US until he was about seven, when his family began to alternate living in Korea and the US for periods of about a year until he moved back to the US for high school. Consequently, Joe spent much of his youth in both countries, and he does not necessarily identify as first or second generation, but rather “somewhere in the middle...I feel more comfortable in America, but Korea is home.” In

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college, Joe said that most of his friends were “Asian.” When asked if he hung out with both Korean and Korean Americans and whether or not it was easy to find friends in these two groups to hang out with, Joe responded that it was easy and that he had friends belonging to both groups. Given that previous research and all other interviewees found themselves befriending people who they share something in common with, it is not surprising that Joe has both Korean and Korean American friends; after all, he has something in common with both groups. Additionally, he is fluent in both English and Korean, and therefore can easily navigate his way around any language barriers that may exist for mono-lingual speakers.

It is important to understand how and where Korean and Korean American students are meeting their friends and what role the University plays in facilitating or hampering the development of cross cultural relationships. All but one of the interviewees explicitly mentioned they met some of their friends either in the residence halls, at registered student organizations (RSOs), at the activities and recreations center (ARC), or in classes. For example, Steve met most of his friends through classes, dorms, or through other friends, while Joe tended to meet his friends through a soccer tournament sponsored by the Korean Cultural Center, a partially University funded RSO, or while working out at the ARC. Even Kate, who said that she was not a part of any groups on campus, said she still occasionally attended RSOs programs and some of her friends were members of these groups. Therefore, Kate likely meets new people when her friends introduce her to new people they met through various RSOs, indirectly impacting her friendship circle. It becomes clear that the University provides spaces in which Korean and Korean American students can meet, such as classrooms, dorms, and RSOs, and provides financial assistance for some programs put on by RSOs.

Perhaps most importantly, the University brings Korean and Korean American students to campus. The number of Korean international students on campus will impact the ability to meet members of these two groups. Bob said that it was easy for him to find new friends because there were so many Korean and Korean Americans on campus. In fact, there are 1,537 Koreans on campus for the Fall 2009 semester (International Student and Scholar Services). Thus, the University is responsible for recruiting thousands of Koreans into the University.

Research Narratives:

Imagine traveling to a foreign country to study, and not knowing anyone who lives there. Who would you try to befriend? People who look, act, and speak like you or those who seem to be completely different than yourself? Who would befriend you? Would anyone avoid you, discriminate against you, or make fun of you because you are foreign? Where would you meet your friends? Now imagine meeting a foreign student in your home country. How would you treat him or her? Would you like to befriend the individual? Would you think you had anything in common with someone born in a foreign country?

In the Fall 2009 semester, there are 1,537 Korean-born students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (hereafter referred to as UIUC) campus who were confronted with this issue of making new friends when they first came to the University (International Student and Scholar Services). This narrative analyzes whether or not Korean-born students form friendships with Korean-American students born in America, why these friendships are or are not formed, and the role the University plays in facilitating these friendships. The data used to

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evaluate these research questions were observations, interviews, and an analysis of previously conducted research.

Research Questions

The general research question aimed to develop an understanding of friendship relationships between Korean and Korean American students at UIUC and looked at several smaller questions to develop this understanding. One of the primary questions was whether or not these two groups voluntarily interacted with one another at events on campus, specifically at Registered Student Organizations (hereafter referred to as RSOs), which are sponsored by and officially recognized by the University. Another main research question examined the role the University played in facilitating relationships, such as providing spaces either dedicated to or promoting these students to meet. One last question central to this research was why Korean and Korean American students did or did not befriend each other. There are currently two theories explaining a tendency for these two groups not to interact: avoiding foreigners and friendship based on common experiences (Zhou 2004; Lee, 1996; Kibria, 1999; US News and Report, 1966). These two theories are evaluated in this narrative

Research Plan

The research plan changed throughout this project. Originally, the plan was to conduct observations and interviews. The research team planned to observe two RSOs on campus, the Korean Students Association and the Korean Cultural Center. Unfortunately, the president of one of these organizations expressed discomfort in participating, and the other organization did not respond to requests to participate. Additionally, the research protocols prevented the use of observations of these two RSOs' websites, which essentially meant the removal of observations of RSOs as a possibility for this narrative. The original plan also included observations of a religious organization on campus and a third RSO, and an interview of a University staff member, however these were not possible due to time constraints and scheduling conflicts. The only observation data used for this analysis was gathered from a presentation given on campus. Luckily, the information gathered by interviews provided a substantial amount of data and was used to analyze the research questions.

The only aspect of the plan that did not change was to interview between six and eight University students, with half being Korean and half being Korean American students. Three of the group members each interviewed two students, one Korean and one Korean American, while one researcher only interviewed one person. In total, seven students were interviewed, three Korean Americans, three Koreans, and one student who did not fit neatly into either classification (this is discussed later in the narrative). Interviews provided the answers to who Koreans and Korean Americans' friends were and where they met. The statements given by the interviewees also highlighted the role the University plays in facilitating friendships between these two groups of students.

Analysis

Before conducting any research, previously conducted research was examined. It indicated that two factors tend to keep Asian Americans from befriending foreign-born members of their ethnic background, for example Korean Americans from befriending Korean-born students studying in America: first, a stigma of being foreign (Zhou 2004; Lee, 1996; Kibria, 1999; US News and Report, 1966); and second, a lack of common experiences (US News and Report, 1966; Kibria, 1999; Kim, 2004). But it is not only Korean Americans who are unwilling to befriend Koreans; the feelings seem to be mutual. Research conducted by students at UIUC show that Korean students tend to befriend only one another because of a shared first language

and common culture (Lee-Chung, 2007; Rhet104C-02; year unknown). These researchers would likely predict that the students interviewed in the present study would not befriend each other.

In the United States today, Korean Americans, and all Asian Americans, are seen as perpetual foreigners and consequently must deal with discriminatory acts against them (Zhou 2004; Lee, 1996; Kibria, 1999). It follows then, that in order to avoid discrimination based on this stereotype, Asian Americans would need to do all that they can to not appear to be foreigners. Researchers argue that this is exactly what Asian Americans do (Kibria, 1999). Specifically, she mentions that they avoid appearing to be “Fresh off the Boat,” commonly referred to as FOBs, who are readily perceived as foreigners due to their speech, actions, and appearance. Kibria mentions that some of these Korean foreign cultural markers are said to include “Asians as group-oriented...obsessed with the display of material goods...not in sync with what is ‘culturally America’...marked by a culture of gender traditionalism” (33). There is such animosity felt by some Asian American groups, for example the Chinese, that some people have committed violent acts against foreign-born members of their same ethnicity (US News and Report, 1966). Not only do Asian Americans not want to appear as foreigners, but researchers also claim that their research shows Asian Americans refrain from hanging out with FOBs who appear to be un-American. As Asian Americans, Korean Americans at the UIUC campus may hold these types of feelings, a topic explored in the interviews conducted for this research.

Even if Korean Americans were willing to spend time with or befriend Koreans, they may find that they have little to talk about. Previously conducted research indicates that Korean Americans feel these two groups have little to nothing in common (US News and Report, 1966; Kibria, 1999; Kim, 2004). Kibria states that Asian Americans tend to feel they have similar past experiences of discrimination and similar upbringings which give Asian Americans something in common with each other:

“...special ties of [American] Asians. These derived from the commonalities of race and culture among [American] Asians, and the shared experiences and personal histories implied by them...they had experienced certain things-being racially lumped together as “Asian”, and being stereotyped as “nerdy,” “foreign,” and so forth...It was also felt that Asian Americans shared common experiences that derived from the values that had been part of their upbringing” (36).

Kibria’s excerpt exemplifies how the 1.5 and second generation Korean Americans she interviewed felt about the friendships they made and why they made them in college. Furthermore, these reasons given for how Korean Americans formed their friendships suggested it was a “‘natural’ course of events” (37) to be friends with other Asian Americans, implying friendships with Koreans or other foreign born people would be unnatural, or forced.

To summarize, previous research about Korean Americans indicates two different themes. First, Korean Americans distance themselves from foreign born Koreans in order to avoid appearing un-American. Secondly, Korean Americans feel like they have the most in common with other Asian Americans. They feel it is only “natural” to be friends with other Asian Americans, and therefore are not likely to be friends with Korean students. In order to determine if Korean Americans on campus share these sentiments, three interviews with Korean American students were conducted. Two of these students were friends with one of the members of the research team who is a Korean international student; consequently, this may have influenced the findings below.

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These three Korean American students had varying numbers of Korean-born friends. One interviewee, Ken, had no Korean-born friends, while another interviewee, Olivia, had a few Korean-born friends, and Andy had several. Language seems to be one of the factors that impacts the possibility of friendships between these two groups. Ken indicated that he had no Korean friends and could not speak Korean, while the other two interviewees both spoke Korean and had Korean-born friends. Ken recognized the relationship between language and friendships when he stated, “I don’t really hang out with foreign born Koreans [due to a] language barrier.” Not only does he find himself different than Koreans, but he could not even communicate with them if he wanted to due to a lack of a shared language. Both of the Korean Americans with Korean born friends were able to speak Korean.

Another reason why only two of the interviewees had relationships with Korean-born students was because of shared experiences. Andy mentioned in his interview that he grew up with Koreans, which would make him comfortable around Korean international students in college. Ken, on the other hand, expressed that he has nothing in common with foreign-born Koreans “...different culture...too different from me,” which would explain why he does not have them as friends. Ken’s experiences indicate that for him personally, he meets Koreans but does not have Korean friends because of a lack of “common experiences.” Though Olivia had some Korean born friends, she too noticed a cultural difference between the two groups, but could not quite explain what the difference was. Their stories support the common experiences theme presented in previous research, but did not support the theme of not associating with Koreans because of an unwillingness to appear as foreigners (US News and Report, 1966; Kibria, 1999; Kim, 2004).

How do Korean students attending U of I feel about interacting with Korean American students? Lee-Chung (2007) conducted a study on Korean-born students who attended UIUC that semester, who came to the US in grade school or high school. She reported that most of these students felt that Korean students who came to the US as college students self-segregated and even made fun of other students who came to the US at a different point in their lives. For example, one of the students Lee-Chung interviewed said Korean students “sometimes do name-calling.” A second study, also previously conducted by a UIUC student, interviewed Asian American students. These students mentioned that Korean international students tended to self-segregate because of common language and culture and also because the large numbers of Koreans on campus meant these students did not need to befriend people who were unlike themselves (Rhet104C-02, year unknown). There is apparently also a tendency for Korean students at UIUC to only befriend other Koreans who came to the US around the same time. The reasons given for the lack of socialization between groups was common language and culture, just as other scholars noted (US News and Report, 1966; Kibria, 1999; Kim, 2004).

However, observations conducted for this study indicated that voluntary segregation may not be desired by all Korean international students. While conducting observations at a public event held at the Asian American Cultural Center on campus, an Asian American girl said that she thought international students wanted to hang out with only international students. A person known to the research team to be a Korean international student quietly mumbled, “no they don’t.” The student meant that he believed international students did not want to room only with one another, but wanted to spend time with American kids, some of which would presumably be Korean American. This willingness to socialize with members of the other group contradicts all of the previously mentioned findings by other researchers.

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To understand who Korean students want to befriend, how and where they befriend them, and whether or not they find making Korean and Korean and American friends easy, three additional interviews with Korean students were conducted. Two of the interviewees, Steve and Kate, both pseudonyms, were born in Korea and moved to the United States during high school. The third interviewee, Bob, also a pseudonym, was born in Korea and lived there his whole life with the exception of one year when he lived in Japan. He is now an international student studying here at the U of I. Because all three of these interviewees spent their first 14 or so years of life in Korea, they are all classified as Koreans for this research.

All three of the Korean-born students said that most of their friends were Korean. Only one person, Bob, the international student, said that his friends were “mostly international students from Korea...and only a few Korean Americans.” This similar pattern of hanging out with Koreans was not reported to be due to a hatred of Korean Americans or an inability to meet them. Bob said that it was “easy to find Korean and Korean American friends to hang out with, and the reason was because there are so many Koreans on this campus and even in his dorm.” Kate too, mentioned that it was not hard for her to find American friends to hang out with, but nevertheless, most of her time is spent hanging out with Korean friends. She added that for most Korean international students, it is easier for them to hang out with other Koreans because of the cultural differences between Koreans and Americans. She said, “I cannot really pick out what the difference is, but I know it is there.” There is also a language barrier for students whose first language is Korean and who feel more comfortable speaking Korean. Kate stated that Korean students need someone to help them out, because sometimes they do not speak English very well. Steve, too, found himself bonding more with Koreans rather than Americans. He felt more comfortable speaking in Korean than in English, so being able to freely and expressively communicate was a positive aspect of having Korean friends.

Like the Korean American students, the statements given by these three Korean-born students indicate that any lack of friendship between these two groups is not due to ill-will. Rather, it is due to feeling more comfortable with members of the same group because of similar cultures and upbringings, and perhaps most importantly, the ability to communicate in one’s preferred language. Consequently, this research supports previously conducted research by finding that for both Korean and Korean American students, lacking common culture and experiences was the main reason not to befriend someone.

One student, Joe, was interviewed for this project did not fit neatly into the classification of Korean American or Korean. Joe was born in America and lived in the US until he was about seven. His family began to alternate living in Korea and the US for periods of about a year until he moved back to the US for high school. Consequently, Joe spent much of his youth in both countries, and he does not necessarily identify as first or second generation, but rather “somewhere in the middle...I feel more comfortable in America, but Korea is home.” In college, Joe said that most of his friends were “Asian.” When asked if he hung out with both Korean and Korean Americans and whether or not it was easy to find friends in these two groups to hang out with, Joe responded that it was easy and that he had friends belonging to both groups. Given that previous research and all other interviewees found themselves befriending people who they share something in common with, it is not surprising that Joe has both Korean and Korean American friends; after all, he has something in common with both groups. Additionally, he is fluent in both English and Korean, and therefore can easily navigate his way around any language barriers that may exist for mono-lingual speakers.

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Previous research had two theories explaining why Korean and Korean American students would tend to not interact with one another. One of these was that Korean American students feared being labeled as foreign-born by other Americans and thus would refuse to associate with Korean international students. None of the Korean Americans interviewed for this project conveyed such a feeling. The second theory held that students would befriend those they had something in common with, particularly a common language. All of the data collected supported this.

It seems that the biggest way the University could promote relationships between these two groups would be to create a space or an event in which these two groups can meet, interact, and determine whether or not they do have things in common. The University can also continue to offer English classes for non-English speakers and Korean classes so that these two groups can have a common language, however, the University should not limit the programs to Korean and Korean Americans. Asian Americans from all ethnicities experience a fear of being labeled as a foreigner, fear discrimination, and may not speak their ancestral language fluently. Therefore, these results findings can be used for all Asian American groups on campus.

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Recommendations:

Based on the research that was conducted, communication was determined to be one of the factors separating Korean and Korean American students from one another. Because of this, one of the ways the University can promote relationships between these two groups is to continue to offer English and Korean classes so that these groups can communicate. Another option to take into account is one-on-one interaction. Korean American and Korean students could be asked to volunteer a few hours of their week to tutor each other in English or Korean and/or spend time with each other. Through this type of personal interaction, they can form a common bond and discover similar interests and form an understanding of each other. The University might also want to consider requiring each RSO to have their websites be available both in English and Korean so that it is accessible to both Korean and Korean American students. This would allow each RSO to have members from both groups. Another recommendation for UIUC would be to create a space or an event where these students can collectively meet and get to know each other through interaction and some kind of activity. Cultural and ethnic food might be an effective way to get these students to come together.