UNDERSTANDING YOUNG KOREAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN’S PEER CULTURE AT A KOREAN HERITAGE LANGUAGE SCHOOL

by

JINHEE KIM

(Under the Direction of Kyunghwa Lee)

ABSTRACT

This study examines how young Korean-American children interpret and share different cultural knowledge and practices with peers, how their shared understanding contributes to their peer culture, and how these children’s peer culture shapes and is shaped by local and larger cultural values and practices. Using ethnographic methods, data were derived from the participant observation of eleven children; field notes; video-and audio-recordings; interviews with their caregivers, teachers, school staff members; and the collection of artifacts over a research period of one academic year at a Korean heritage language school located in a metropolitan area in the southeastern United States. Drawing on multidisciplinary frameworks that include cultural psychology, a language socialization approach, and an interpretive reproduction approach, this study focused on understanding young Korean-American children’s shared meanings, norms, and practices in their peer culture. Specific findings were drawn from an inductive analysis based on grounded theory.

Findings suggest that Korean-American children actively negotiate their shared meaning and reflect larger cultural values and beliefs within their peer culture. Through peer interactions, the most critical tool for socialization, these children negotiated with their peers the social and
cultural knowledge they acquired from the adult world. This study not only sheds light on the peer culture of young Korean-American children but also provides important implications for early childhood education and teacher education. This study calls for further research on other rarely studied minority groups.

INDEX WORDS: Peer culture, Korean-American children, Korean immigrant caregivers, Heritage language school, Self, Naming practices, Friendship, Conflicts, Ethnographic study
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DEDICATION

To my father (1949-2007)

who believed and trusted me than any others in the world
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

All people in the world face restrictions to the extent they live their lives with others. There is no humanity to single human beings except through interaction with other human beings—even if the interaction is indirect, painful and most of the relevant others are dead. (Varenne & McDermott, 1999, p. 132)

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are continuously undergoing countless visible or invisible interactions with other people, and children are not exempt from these interactions. However, adults often disregard young children’s interactions with other children as being immature acts. When I was a fifth grader, I moved to a new town and attended a new elementary school in my home country of Korea. Full of excitement and nervousness, I started to get to know my new classmates. Over the first few weeks in this new environment, I realized several differences between this new school and my previous one. For instance, my old classmates often politely told our teacher “Teacher, have good lunch!” in Korean as a sign of respect; however, my new classmates did not. I was puzzled by my new classmates’ seeming lack of respect for the teacher. Yet, because of my shyness and newcomer status, I was too afraid to speak directly to our teacher. Instead, as the time for our teacher’s lunch drew near, I whispered to a new friend sitting next to me that we should tell our teacher “Have good lunch!” My new classmate agreed with a smile. However, as I began to relay our decision to another classmate, we were rebuked by the teacher: “Be quiet! This is not talking time.” Our innocent intention was misunderstood, and I was erroneously labeled as a talkative troublemaker.
Although about 20 years have passed since those events, I still believe children’s peer interactions should not be considered secondary to adult-child interactions. During my graduate research in the United States, I repeatedly found it difficult to capture the targeted children’s voices during their peer interactions in a classroom setting due to the overlapping voices of the teacher and other peers. The teacher’s voice resonated throughout the classroom and was dominant over the children’s peer interactions. Due to this interference, children’s peer interactions in a classroom setting are frequently regarded as chat or even as interruptions to instruction as illustrated by Vivian Paley (1986). Though children are often allowed to choose their own activities, such as drawing, reading, and writing in the early childhood classroom, the impatient voices of teachers all too often prevent children from interacting with peers. I have always been curious about how children talk to each other, what they say, and what it means to them to be seen as a backdrop to other teacher-child interactions. As I believe children’s interactions play an important role in understanding the values and beliefs of the society they belong to, participate in, and construct knowledge within, I have long wanted to conduct a study that, like a camera, pans and zooms in and out to capture the multiple interactions occurring simultaneously within a classroom.

We exist in a continuum in which we negotiate meanings and decide certain ways of understanding social values across time and space (Bruner, 1986, 1996; Greenfield, 1997; Rogoff, 2003). Likewise, as children grow, they experience new social interactions in various contexts with other children and adults. Women’s increased participation in our ever more industrialized society has also led to an increase in the time children spend with their peers. Consequently, children are forced to engage with peers in various contexts outside their own home, such as classrooms, after school programs, and extracurricular programs (Harris, 1995;
Ladd, 2005). In addition, scholars have agreed that peers in many ways offer unique influences on children’s lives in early childhood (and even up to adulthood) that adults or siblings cannot provide. They have found that children’s peer social worlds are associated with multiple aspects of their lives (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003). Researchers agree that peer relations are critical to children’s success in and out of school (Brownell & Gifford-Smith, 2003; Hay, Payne, & Chadwick, 2004). Many researchers found that successful social relations with peers are linked to children’s adjustment to school (Blatchford, Baines, & Pellegrini, 2003; Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003; Ladd, 1990). For example, peer rejection correlates to children’s low achievement in school and negative attitudes toward school (Bush & Ladd, 2001; Ladd, 1990). Recently, some researchers have become interested in the influences of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds on peer relations and have conducted cross-cultural studies of peer relations (Chen, French, & Schneider, 2006; Ladd, 1999, 2005). For example, Chen and Rubin (1992) found that children in Chinese and Canadian elementary schools recognized shyness and sensitivity differently. While shyness and sensitivity were negatively associated with peer acceptance in Canadian children, they were positively related with peer acceptance among Chinese children. Tabors and Snow (1994) found that native English speakers in preschools in the United States tend to ignore non-native speakers until non-native speakers can produce some words in English (as cited in Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004).

Due to the recent increase in immigration to the United States, children are exposed to more opportunities to interact with peers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Children within immigrant communities also often attend community-based weekend or after-school heritage programs. As a result, these children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds experience two different peer group interactions: one with children who share their
cultural and linguistic background and the other with the larger English-speaking American population. Within and across the different contexts in which these children are situated, they voluntarily or involuntarily negotiate values, beliefs, and practices of peer groups with other children, and they are sometimes challenged by values different from those of their heritage culture (Brownell & Gifford-Smith, 2003).

Therefore, children’s social worlds, especially the negotiation process among and between peers, can be a powerful source for better understanding what and how children think, feel, and share with their peers. It can also illuminate how children’s social processes are both different from and similar to those of adults, and the different meanings each group ascribes to these processes.

**Statement of the Problem**

*Why Peer Culture?*

As Rogoff (2003) explained, “Culture is . . . formed from the efforts of people working together” (p. 51). We continuously co-construct, share, and negotiate meanings with others. Our participation in the co-construction of meaning within our own local context both supports our own socialization and contributes to the process of building a local culture. Children exist within this same continuum and are affiliated with various subcultures just like their adult counterparts. At a micro level, a child’s peer group or a “cohort or group of children who spend time together” (Corsaro, 1997, p. 95) represents a kind of “local context . . . embedded in many larger nested and overlapping contexts” (Graue & Walsh, 1998, p. 10). As Handel (2006) noted, “A child’s social participation with persons of his own age, at succeeding levels, is recognized as being highly significant in his socialization” (p. 16). In other words, peers contribute to the acquisition and construction of a child’s social and cultural knowledge. At the same time, this knowledge

I believe that children may derive their social and cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs from the adult world, but they make sense of these contexts through their own perspectives, as shaped by them and their peers. This stance parallels that of Corsaro (1997), who noted that children rationalize the adult world according to their own views and produce their own cultures that exceed the internalization of cultural knowledge in their society. Children build and maintain their own peer cultures, defined as “stable set[s] of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that they produce and share in interaction with peers” (p. 95). These peer cultures then “become part of, and contribute to, the wider cultures of other children and adults within which they are embedded” (p. 95). Children’s peer cultures are very meaningful in that they empower children as “active contributor[s] to the meaning making process” (Budwig, 2003a, p. 223). As Elgas (2003) noted, “cultural knowledge [shared by children] can be defined . . . as knowing how this peer culture is enacted (through a set of actions, attitudes, values, and artifacts or objects)” (p. 53). Thus, peer cultures allow educators and researchers to understand children’s know-what and know-how in local contexts through their own terms. Through understanding “children’s shared grasp of the peer cultures’ underlying knowledge structure” (p. 46), teachers can support appropriate learning environments for children because “outstanding teaching is built on a base of knowledge about students” (Ayers, 2001, p. 73).

Several researchers have also explored the link between children’s peer groups and culture by using interdisciplinary perspectives (e.g., Aydt & Corsaro, 2003; Connolly, 1998; Corsaro & Molinari, 2005; Goodwin, 1990; Kyratzis, 2001, 2004; Lofdahl, 2005; Meyer, Klein, & Cenishi, 1994; Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990; Moore, 2002). Although not all
scholars directly mention the term *peer culture*, they share a general agreement that peer culture is a large part of children’s lives (Corsaro, 1992, 1997; Ladd 2005). They explicitly or implicitly approach the relationship between peer interactions and culture as a dynamic process of meaning construction (Rogoff, 2003). For example, most researchers with socio-historical perspectives mainly focus on how children participate in cultural practices by looking for “shared activity (cultural practices)” and “shared meaning (cultural interpretation)” (Greenfield, 1997, p. 303). Socio-historical modes of inquiry have a common perspective in that “individual and cultural processes are *mutually constituting* rather than defined separately from each other” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 51). Specifically, Vygotsky (1978, 1987) argues that children can learn and develop cultural knowledge and practices through interactions with more capable others, including peers, within a *zone of proximal development*. His theory, which values social interactions, has provided a powerful framework for research on peer relations (Branco, 2003; Corsaro, 1997; Rogoff, 2003). Similarly, Rogoff’s (1990) notion of *guided participation* extends Vygotsky’s idea, supporting the belief that children actively collaborate in the process of sharing meaning. Researchers consider peer culture as a continuum in which children, as active agents, internalize adult skills and knowledge through language and share cultural meanings through internalization (Corsaro, 1997; Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990a; Rogoff, 2003). Corsaro and his colleagues (e.g., Corsaro, 1997; Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Corsaro & Molinari, 2005; Corsaro, Molinari, Hadley, & Sugioka, 2003; Corsaro & Nelson, 2003; Corsaro & Rosier, 1992; Gaskins, Miller, & Corsaro, 1992) also explained the study of children’s peer relations and the process of internalization. They noted that children not only construct their own cultural meanings with others beyond imitating the adult world, but they also contribute to the production of culture (Corsaro, 1985, 1992, 1997; Gaskins et al., 1992). In other words, they emphasize children’s
active agency and the collective processes of dynamic meaning construction beyond “the individualistic doctrine that sees social development solely as the private internalization of adult skills and knowledge” (Corsaro & Eder, 1990, p. 199).

As children’s peers serve “different purposes in children’s lives at different ages” (Gifford-Smith & Brownell, 2003, p. 235), the nature of peer cultures may not be the same in different contexts and with different peer group members. Even certain peer culture’s shared meanings “may seem inappropriate to adults, but they are appropriate and real to children” (Elgas, 2003, p. 46). Depending on where we are, where we have been, and who we are, we can construct different meanings from the same situation, and different situations in various communities can be interpreted as having similar meanings (Rogoff, 2003). This is why meaning making in the dynamic cultural process occurs “not only from child to child but from time to time for one child” (Gaskins et al., 1992, p. 12). In particular, children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the United States may possess peer cultures different from or similar to mainstream children’s peer culture. Because peer culture “consists of a system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, and customs shared by members of an interacting group” (Fine, 1987, p. 125), examination of the tacit knowledge held within culturally and linguistically different children’s peer groups can lead to an understanding of these minority children on their own terms.

However, to date, little research has documented children’s peer culture. Scholars studying friendship and peer interaction seldom address the influence of culture and context (Gaskins, 2006). Additionally, as Rogoff (2003) noted, much of the research on child development has focused on middle-class European American populations. The vast majority of studies of peer culture have overlooked how children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds establish, negotiate, and maintain their peer culture through interaction and how
their peer culture is interrelated to the adult world and other peer cultures. Moreover, as Göncü (1999) stated, traditional research is “insufficient to penetrate into local knowledge about children’s development in their own cultures” (p. 4). Considering the fact that research has rarely examined how cultural and linguistic minority children construct and share meaning among their peers, closer attention to these children’s peer culture is necessary.

*Why Peer Interaction?*

Peer interactions were first explored in the 1930s (Branco, 2003), when researchers began to study the nature and characteristics of children’s peer group behaviors (Ladd, 1999, 2005). These early studies on peer interactions were largely based on behaviorism, and historically, much of the work on peer interactions has been led by psychologists. Drawing on developmental psychology, peer culture tends to be differentiated by researchers into peer interactions and peer relationships (Ladd, 2005). *Peer interactions* are defined as “behavioral processes, such as the sequences of physical or verbal exchanges that occur between members of a friendship or a peer group and peer relationships” (Ladd, p. 6), while *peer relationships* are described as being “typically inferred from specific features of children’s peer-related interaction, thoughts, or feelings” (p. 7). Peer relationships consider “the type, nature, and duration of the interactions that occur between children” (p. 7) as indicators of relationships. However, because interaction with others functions to deliver information as well as to create and maintain values and beliefs, the difference between peer interactions and peer relationships is rarely as clear-cut as Ladd makes it out to be. This differentiation between peer interactions and peer relationships is clear evidence of researchers’ lack of awareness of “the fundamental influences of culture in organizing the activities and contexts involved in social interaction” (Gaskins, 2006, p. 284).
Some researchers (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004) see peer talk as a subcategory of peer interaction due to its interchangeability with peer interaction. However, because young children cannot fully express their thoughts and ideas with only verbal language, I believe researchers must look beyond mere verbal interactions. To this end, I view peer interaction as constituted by both children’s verbal and non-verbal communication. As illustrated by researchers emphasizing children’s agency (e.g., Corsaro, 1985, 1997; Elgas, 2003; Hadley, 2003), peer culture can encompass both the invisible and visible processes of peer relations and reduce the risk of vaguely differentiating between peer interactions and peer relationships. Therefore, this study stems from my belief that peer interaction embraces both children’s verbal and non-verbal communication and is closely interwoven within children’s unique peer cultures.

As researchers have become aware of the important interdependence between culture and individual functioning (Rogoff, 2003), interdisciplinary perspectives have been used to shed light on the interplay of children’s peer relations and culture (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004; Corsaro, 1985; Goodwin, 1990; Hutchby, 2005; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b); they have agreed that social and cultural knowledge underlies language routines. Through interactions with others, children come to understand “social order and cultural meanings” (Ochs, 1990, p. 290) as well as acquire language forms and functions (Budwig, 2003a, 2003b; Ochs, 1990; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b; Watson-Gegeo, 2004). As Bruner (1996) noted, “It is principally through interacting with others that children find out what the culture is about and how it conceives of the world” (p. 20). Interactions with others (including both adults and children) function to help children construct and understand meanings. Similarly, in illustrating that peer groups are a locus for the learning of language and culture, Goodwin (1990) argued, “Interaction thus constitutes a central place where members of society collaboratively establish
how relevant events are to be interpreted, and moreover use such displays of meaningfulness as a constitutive feature of the activities in which they engage” (pp. 1-2). She understood social meaning to be created and recreated by children through peer interactions. Agreeing with Goodwin’s perspective, Corsaro (1985, 1997) believed that peer culture is deeply interrelated with peer interactions and is an arena where children produce and share local knowledge and contribute to the larger society: “The child enters into a social nexus, and through interaction with others builds up a social understanding which becomes a core of social knowledge on which the child builds throughout the life course” (Corsaro, 1985, p. 74). Corsaro (1985, 1997, 2005) and his colleagues (e.g., Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Corsaro & Rosier, 1992) revealed that peer culture shows “children’s interpretive reproduction” and “co-construction of specific language-bound cultural patterns” (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004, p. 294).

These researchers emphasize the role of peer interactions in peer culture, suggesting that every discursive practice reflects children’s social relationships and friendships. Children’s interactions with each other provide good opportunities for socialization (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004; Paugh, 2005), in which “children participate in and successively move through a series of peer cultures” (Corsaro, 1985, p. 270). Peer interaction is a kind of social interaction. It is important “not only for language learning but also for discovering what counts as valued social behaviour by both the peer group and by adults” (Drury, 2004, p. 42). As a relevant example, I often witnessed children’s negotiation of the cultural values and beliefs embedded in their interactions during my study in a Korean heritage language school. One day, two bilingual preschool girls were drawing and sharing crayons. Joohee, who was born in the United States but felt more comfortable speaking Korean, took a gray crayon and silently placed it in front of Jessica, a biracial child, who was born in the United States and felt more comfortable speaking

Jessica’s practicing with Joohee of a predictable speaking routine (“Please . . .” ⇒ “Thank you”) taught Joohee about the expected and acceptable ways of making a request and expressing gratitude in English. Jessica also instructed Joohee on the shared cultural values and beliefs of their peer culture, which are often taken for granted in the adult world. Interactions with peers like these “embody values and [beliefs] that are appropriate for relationships between persons. . . . Values [and beliefs] embedded in the culture and social structure are expressed in these ways of communicating” (Peters & Boggs, 1986, p. 94). In other words, “through interaction with peers, children learn that they can regulate social bonds on the basis of criteria that emerge from their personal needs and social contextual demands” (Corsaro, 1985, p.121), and “the joint production of peer interaction is an immediate and highly conscious shared event” (p. 273).

Thus, renowned researchers in the field of children’s language and social development regard children’s interactions as a core component in the study of children’s cultural production and reproduction (Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Gaskins et al., 1992; Kyratzis, 2004). Researchers also perceive peer interaction as a powerful socialization force instrumental in the learning of first and second languages (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004). In this vein, Hamo, Blum-Kulka, and Hacohen (2004) noted that peer talk has “a double opportunity space” (p.73) for understanding
children’s process of meaning making, because peer culture and “the development of discursive skills [are] a stepping stone for adult-like uses of language and for gaining membership in adult culture” (pp. 73-74). Likewise, Kyratzis (2004) agreed that “peer talk is essential for elaborating peer cultures” (p. 640). She believed that peer talk helps children present and negotiate their identities and that the ideologies which they experience are anchored in peer interaction. 

Investigation of children’s peer interactions can uncover how children construct their social worlds and can provide new insights for adults who may have formerly taken these interactions for granted. Goodwin and Kyratzis (2007) also noted that children’s peer interaction provides tools to examine how children co-construct their meaning and values.

Despite these expressions of interest in the study of children’s peer interactions, few studies have investigated this topic fully. Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004) described the reasons for this paucity as follows:

Perhaps peer interaction among preschool and young school-aged children has been a somewhat peripheral and non-cumulative field of research, compared at least to adult–child interaction, because studies of peer interaction derive from a number of different intellectual traditions which have had little contact with one another. (p. 292)

Compared to studies of children’s interactions with adults, little research on children’s peer interactions exists (Blum-Kulka, Huck-Taglicht, & Avni, 2004; Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004; Nicolopoulou, 2002). Additionally, studies of peer interaction have been conducted unsystematically, and when they have appeared they have been relatively neglected. Goodwin (1990) also pointed out researchers’ tendency to conduct unsystematic investigations into the language that children use with their peers. Therefore, due to the indispensable nature of peer
interaction and peer culture for understanding children’s lives, more studies of peer interaction in peer culture, and peer culture in peer interaction, are needed.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe and understand the under-researched peer culture of Korean-American children in a Korean language school, a context outside of the traditional research focus on formal school contexts. Korean-American children represent an overlooked cultural and linguistic minority group. This study seeks to foreground the ways in which these children play active roles in their lives by looking closely at what they do and say at a Korean heritage language school. Instead of focusing on the formal school classroom, where these children are often perceived as incompetent due to their minority status, this study focuses on a heritage school so as to illuminate the ways Korean-American children make sense of themselves and others in both local and larger cultural contexts. Specifically, this study focuses on the values, beliefs, and practices children share and negotiate in peer groups, how the social and cultural knowledge underpinning peer culture is embedded in peer interactions, and what role peer culture plays in the children’s lives and the larger cultural context. The examination of peer interactions aims to elucidate the processes by which Korean-American children co-construct social and cultural knowledge with peers in a bilingual and bicultural context.

**Research Questions**

My research questions are as follows:

1. How is peer culture organized at a Korean language school?
   - What values and beliefs do Korean-American children share with peers?
   - How do Korean-American children create and negotiate social and cultural knowledge and practices with peers?
2. How is the peer culture of Korean-American children embedded in their peer interactions?
   - How do bicultural and bilingual factors influence these children’s peer interactions?
   - In what ways do these children attempt to control their lives in peer interactions?
3. How does the larger culture surrounding the children influence, construct, and/or organize their social and cultural knowledge within peer culture?

**Significance of the Study**

Little research has examined how cultural and linguistic minority children construct social and cultural knowledge and negotiate shared meanings in peer groups. Korean-American children are no exception, and very few studies have investigated how young Korean-American children co-construct social and cultural knowledge with peers. The dearth of literature focusing on the relationships between peer culture and peer interactions among cultural and linguistic minority children reflects an overall neglect of minority children’s ability to negotiate meanings and construct their own peer culture. To date, research has often portrayed minority children as being passive and lacking in agency. Varenne and McDermott (1999) pointed out that researchers often take a deficit perspective and focus on “what is ‘wrong’ . . . with the [minority] children and often their families” (p. 139) by presenting these children and their families as “‘socially disadvantaged’ or ‘linguistically deprived’ or, even worse, ‘culturally’ deprived” (p. 142). Long, Volk, and Gregory (2007) also argued that the deficit approach “looks at children from nondominant cultures by focusing on what they do not know and what they are not able to do” (p. 239). This study is designed to counter the deficit perspective by illuminating how cultural and linguistic minority children are capable of negotiating and creating meaning through peer interactions.
As Bruner (1996) mentioned, “Mental life is lived with others, is shared to be communicated, and unfolds with the aid of cultural codes, traditions, and the like. But this extends beyond school. Education does not only occur in classrooms” (p. xi). Learning is not limited to regular school contexts. Bourne (2001) also pointed out: “Although pedagogic discourses are central to the teachers’ and the researchers’ frames of reference, they play relatively little part in the children’s lives in proportion to time spent on other discourses engaged in both at school and outside” (p. 113). Therefore, it is vital that researchers inquire into children’s lives in various contexts beyond formal school settings, even though gaining access to the world of young children is challenging for researchers. For this reason, this study will help us recognize the discourses engaged in by young Korean-American children outside of formal school settings.

As educators, we need to keep in mind that, “Teaching is an interactive practice that begins and ends with seeing [and listening to] the students” (Ayers, 2001, p. 25). By recognizing that children are not empty vessels to be filled by adults, and observing what children say and how they interact outside of formal school settings, we will be able to gain valuable insight into how children in general, and cultural and linguistic minority children in particular, learn. This study will not only shed light on the peer culture of young Korean-American children but also serve as a call for further research on other rarely studied minority groups.

The Format

This dissertation includes seven chapters. Chapter One introduced the topic, statement of the problem, research questions, and significance of the study. Chapter Two describes the study’s theoretical frameworks, including cultural psychology, language socialization, and interpretive reproduction approaches, and reviews the relevant literature. Chapter Three explains the
methodology that guided this study. Chapter Four describes the research site, participants, and the perspectives of caregivers to help understand the context of the study. Chapter Five examines how the children co-construct and negotiate social and cultural knowledge with peers through naming practices. Chapter Six discusses how the children understand the concept of friendship and solve conflicts in their peer culture by reflecting larger cultural beliefs and values. Chapter Seven summarizes the findings of this study and discusses the implications for early childhood educators and early childhood researchers.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS & LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes two sections that present my theoretical frameworks and literature review. In the first section, I discuss the theoretical frameworks which inform both my view of children as active agents in their own lives and my understanding of the relationships between language and culture. In the second section, I introduce literature related to the construction of my theoretical frameworks—cultural psychology, language socialization, and interpretive reproduction. Each facet of these frameworks offered meaningful insight into my study. Cultural psychology grounded my research in the study of human development in culture, while language socialization approaches buttressed my study of bilingual children’s language practices. Finally, an interpretive reproduction approach allowed me to analyze and gain insight into the nature of children’s peer culture.

![Diagram: Children’s Peer Culture]

Figure 2 Theoretical frameworks for the study
Theoretical Frameworks

Cultural Psychology

Culture plays a critical role in our lives but particularly in the lives of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. For example, many Korean immigrant children and Korean-American children, caught between their parents’ culture and the host culture, retain two very different cultural practices and languages. Because of this, they maintain a continuous negotiation process whereby they pursue shared meaning in American cultural contexts while simultaneously participating in Korean cultural practices. In this vein, cultural psychology is helpful in discovering how cultural and linguistic minority children negotiate and share different cultural meanings and practices.

However, culture has been overlooked for years in the field of human development. Cultural psychology reemerged in the late 1980s throughout various disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, and linguistics in response to critiques of perceived universalism and decontextualized methodology in the traditional perspectives of developmental psychology (Bruner, 1996; Cole, 1996; Greenfield, 2000; Shweder, 1990; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). A burgeoning interdisciplinary interest in the field of cultural psychology has further contributed to developing and redefining the use and meaning of culture in various fields (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993), a topic I will discuss in the next section. Consequently, cultural psychology has grown up as an academic field “document[ing] historical and cross-cultural diversity in the processes and products of the human mind” (Shweder, Goodnow, Hatono, LeVine, Markus, & Miller, 1998, p. 866). Shweder and his colleagues argued, “cultural psychology is not a new field, . . . [but] a re-
newed field” (p. 866) informed by contemporary research from several disciplines.
Unlike traditional psychologists, cultural psychologists conceptualize the relationship between the human mind and culture as mutually constitutive (Shweder et al., 1998). From this point of view, unless we perceive and interpret ourselves and things around us within a cultural frame, we may become nothing but an “empty abstraction” (Bruner, 1996, p. 3). Shweder et al. defined cultural psychology as:

The study of the mental life of individuals in relation to the symbolic [e.g., ideas, understandings, beliefs, and doctrines] and behavioral inheritances [e.g., routines and practices] of particular cultural communities. It is the study of the way culture, community, and psyche are mutually instantiating. (p. 868)

Thus, by focusing on particular cultural communities and resisting universalism, cultural psychologists try to understand human development in both local and larger cultural contexts.

*Human Development as Cultural Processes*

According to the premise of cultural psychology, culture is not static, and human beings are not passively influenced by the outside world in a unidirectional way (Rogoff, 2003). With respect to the relationships between culture and human development as mutually constitutive (Shweder et al., 1998), cultural psychologists perceive human development as a *process* in cultural communities. In his 1990 article, Shweder defined the basic premise of cultural psychology as follows:

[N]o sociocultural environment exists or has identity independent of the way human beings seize meanings and resources from it, while every human being has her or his subjectivity and mental life altered through the process of seizing meanings and resources from some sociocultural environment and using them. (p. 2)
That is, the interactive relationships between culture and human development reflect the idea that human beings develop through “the dual process of shaping and being shaped through culture” (Cole, 1996, p. 103). In this sense, Shweder and his colleagues (1998) pointed out the importance of understanding the “process by which contexts and meanings become essential and active components inside as well as outside the psychological system of individuals” (p. 871). Likewise, Greenfield (1997) also explained human development as a “socially interactive process” that occurs through “shared activity” and “shared meaning” (p. 303). In other words, from the cultural psychologist’s view, culture not only shapes a “custom complex” (Shweder et. al, 1998, p. 872) consisting of the symbolic (mentalities) and behavioral (practices) inheritances, but also is shaped by people’s ways of thinking and doing. In short, human development and culture form an ongoing and deeply interdependent relation.

In addition, as Shweder and his colleagues (1998) noted, the meanings created through the interactive process are not the same across all cultural communities. Rogoff (2003) also noted that different meanings could be constructed from the same situation across various communities and that different situations could be interpreted as having similar meanings. Miller and Goodnow (1995) further articulated a functionally equivalent but different meaning by distinguishing practices from activities. Unlike activities, practices are “meaningful action[s] . . . that are engaged by many or most members of a cultural group and that carry with them normative expectations about how things should be done” (p. 6). For example, American people often signal quotation marks with two fingers when they want to emphasize certain words or signal to listeners that they are quoting. However, people in other cultural contexts may assign a different meaning to this action. When actions are combined with shared meaning, they become cultural practices, which are “packaged with values about what is natural, mature, morally right,
or aesthetically pleasing” (p. 6). Cultural practices are often repeated or habitual parts of each individual’s life in a given cultural community. They implicitly or explicitly follow the community’s moral principles and are thought of as right or natural. The shared meaning and practices in a cultural community contribute to the construction of individual and group identities (Miller & Goodnow, 1995; Shweder et al., 1998).

In the dual process of shaping and being shaped by culture, human beings in cultural communities simultaneously perform the roles of both receiver and creator of cultural practices and meanings. Instead of simply adopting cultural ways, individuals actively participate in sharing, recreating, and transforming cultural practices (Bruner, 1996; Shweder et al., 1998). In particular, Rogoff (2003) emphasized the notion of *participation* rather than *membership* in a cultural community. Rogoff and Angelillo (2002) explained the meaning of participation:

> Participants in a community are not necessarily members. . . . People are often participants in the practices of more than one community (e.g., participating in national as well as religious, political, ethnic, and economic groups’ traditions); the cultural ways of the varying communities in which they participate may or may not conflict with each other. (pp. 222-223)

Through this multifaceted and dynamic cultural process, people become engaged participants rather than non-participatory members (Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff & Angelillo, 2002). That is, participants actively perpetuate the symbolic and behavioral inheritances. Cultural practices are not made up solely of an individual’s participation, because individual participation is always tied up with the participation of others. Even when someone performs an action on his or her own, what he or she does is interpreted by others (Shweder et al., 1998). Therefore, in cultural
communities, shared meaning results from the participatory process in which individuals negotiate meanings with others.

The View of Language in Cultural Psychology

Shweder and his colleagues (1998) pointed out, “language is fundamental not only to meaning construction and socialization but to identity. Through its association with particular contexts, language comes to symbolize and ‘belong to’ particular sociocultural groups. Quite simply, there can be no cultural psychology without language’’ (p. 887). This argument implies that language plays an important role in the various interactions and meaning making of the cultural process. At the same time, language can not be separate from values and beliefs held by participants in a particular community. In other words, language is perceived as a communication tool and as a mediator shaping an individual’s values and beliefs in different ways in different cultural communities.

By applying this view to children’s worlds, cultural psychology provides insight into how children use language to share, negotiate, and contribute to the construction of meaning with their peers in the cultural process because “language provides children with a powerful tool to apprehend, represent, and transform their worlds” (Budwig, 2003a, p. 217). The role of language is particularly critical to the socialization and identity construction of children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds. Cultural psychologists have argued that children are not passive recipients of adults’ knowledge but instead are active agents who contribute to the construction of meaning (Bruner, 1996; Rogoff, 2003; Shweder et al., 1998). Children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds are no exception. They participate in the socialization process within their peer groups as experts themselves, much as adults participate in the socialization process of the next generation (Greenfield, 2000). Thus, investigating language
from the perspective of cultural psychology allowed me to see how language used by Korean-American children reflects their views of themselves and their worlds.

*Language Socialization*

Within the field of cultural psychology, language socialization research also provided another critical buttress to my study. Language socialization focuses on language development and socialization as cultural processes. Language socialization flourished in the 1980s alongside cultural psychology’s emphasis on the interdependence between culture and human development; it was developed as a stay against the lack of psycholinguistic and anthropological approaches to culture and language (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004). The language socialization approach supports the perspective that through language, human beings acquire the ways and functions of communication and organize sociocultural knowledge (Crago, Annahatak, & Ningiuruvik, 1993; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schecter & Bayley, 2004; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b). Thus, this approach considers language as a symbolic system which is inseparable from cultural contexts and is an important mediator in human development (Budwig, 2003a; Shweder et al., 1998).

Language socialization scholars believe that culture is constructed through social interactions, and conversely, culture influences social interactions. In particular, Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) explained the relationship between language and culture as:

- bodies of knowledge, structures of understanding, conceptions of the world, and collective representations (which) are extrinsic to any individual and contain more information than any individual could know or learn. Culture encompasses variations in knowledge between individuals, but such variation, although crucial to what an
individual may know and to the social dynamic between individuals, does not have its locus within the individual. (p. 284)

As such, Language socialization is deeply interconnected with the cultural process, and language is the most important dimension of socialization.

The purpose of research on language socialization is for “the understanding of how persons become competent members of social groups and the role of language in this process” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b, p. 167). A common principle of language socialization is that people are socialized through the use of language as well as socialized to use language (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002; Heath, 1990; Ochs, 1990; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Paugh, 2005; Schecter & Bayley, 2004; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b). Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) articulated two principles encompassing the language socialization framework:

1. The process of acquiring language is deeply affected by the process of becoming a competent member of a society.

2. The process of becoming a competent member of society is realized to a large extent through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across socially defined situations. (p. 277)

Language socialization focuses on the process of language acquisition and the process of socialization, which are understood as one unit (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b). That is, scholars of language socialization see the socialization process within both what is said (content) and how it is said (manner) (Ochs, 1990).

In particular, scholars agree that speaking as a form of social action interlocks with the cultural process (Ochs, 1990; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b; Shweder et al., 1998). Schieffelin and Ochs (1986b) argued, “Vocal and verbal activities are generally socially organized and
embedded in cultural systems of meaning” (p. 164). They consider language, especially speech, to be a highly organized activity that reflects and constructs reality (Budwing, 2003a, 2003b; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b; Shweder et al., 1998). For example, Ochs and Schieffelin (1984) observed children’s negotiations of meaning with their caregivers in three different communities: The United States, Kaluli, and Samoa. The cultural values and beliefs of each community were embedded in the children’s interactions with their caregivers. European American middle-class caregivers viewed even very young children as “communicative partners” (p. 286) and therefore listened to children’s stories and attempted to interpret children’s unintelligible utterances. In contrast, very young Kaluli children were treated as those who “have no understanding” (p. 289); thus their caregivers offered minimal communicative interaction with the children and did not attempt to elaborate on children’s utterances. In Samoa, the children’s interactions with their caregivers reflected the highly ordered and stratified Samoan society. In relation to status and rank in family, children were encouraged “to notice others, listen to them, and adapt one’s own speech to their particular status and needs” (p. 298). This classic study posits the idea that communicative practices play an important role in children’s sharing of cultural knowledge with adults.

Researchers on language socialization have also examined the ways in which linguistic structures and functions exhibit a tacit understanding of a particular cultural community (Ochs, 1990; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b). In other words, language socialization researchers attempt to explore how linguistic forms correspond to cultural value and meaning. By examining linguistic features with a focus on language structure with narrative units (e.g., Miller et al., 1990) or lexical or grammatical forms (e.g., Budwig, 2000), researchers also explored how meaning is constructed between adults and children. Budwig (2003b), for
example, studied the use of self-reference forms in the interactions of children and their caregivers in America and Germany. She found that the German children used the first-person pronominal forms (“I”, “me”) less frequently than did American children. She also found that autonomy was focused linguistically in the American caregivers and children, whereas “the ways in which the children’s behavior relates to others in a normative sense” (p. 119) were emphasized by the German caregivers and children. Her findings indicate that through language practices, children learn, share, and negotiate meaning in their cultural communities. As another example, Byon (2003) found that the use of the sentence-ending particle ‘yo’ as an honorific of politeness was emphasized between teachers and Korean American children at heritage language schools. Without considering contextual dimensions, grammatical and discourse structures cannot be fully understood because a single set of linguistic forms indexes contextual dimension (Ochs, 1990). As noted by Rogoff (2003), if content and manner of language are not thought of as one unit, researchers may not be aware of data that is functionally equivalent but reveals different meanings. Thus, language socialization scholars believe that both the concepts of socialization through language and socialization to use language are intertwined with each other (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002; Heath, 1990; Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a, 1986b; Ochs, 1990; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984). In addition, the dual focus on linguistic form and contextual dimensions within the language socialization framework has lead researchers to perform micro analyses of “cultural beliefs and practices of the families, social groups, or communities into which children are socialized” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b, p. 168).

Language socialization researchers have traditionally paid attention to the interaction between children and caregivers (e.g., Crago et al., 1993; Ochs & Shohet, 2006; Kulick, 1992; Melzi, 2000; Miller & Moore, 1989; Miller & Wiley, 1997; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schecter
Empirical research on language socialization has downplayed young children’s language socialization in peer groups by focusing on “the important role of ‘input’ from the adult world” (Nicolopoulou, 2002, p. 118). Interestingly, although language socialization has been considered a lifelong process (Heath, 1990; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Shweder et al., 1998), early studies of language socialization focused more on the primary years of children’s language socialization (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) and looked for interactions between caregivers and children. Because children’s interactions begin with their caregivers as soon as they are born, caregivers may be thought of as the most powerful agents in children’s socialization (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002).

However, Schieffelin and Ochs (1986b) found that children negotiate and share cultural meaning with adults and others instead of merely internalizing cultural knowledge. This means that children actively organize cultural knowledge themselves even as they socialize others in their community (Ochs, 1986). As He (2003) noted, “socialization cannot be accomplished without the co-construction of novice” (p. 129). That is, children do not just co-construct but also reshape cultural meaning in socializing interactions (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002). They become competent participants in cultural communities through dynamic interaction with their counterparts (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986b). This perspective suggests that children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds become competent participants in a cultural community just as mainstream children do.

The language socialization approach allowed me to focus on how Korean-American children’s peer interactions, which are intertwined with peer cultures and are embedded in the larger culture, center on speaking as “a form of social action” (Shweder et al., 1998, p. 888).
rather than focusing on these children’s language development per se. Identifying cultural patterns of children’s language practices, I explored how children actively use these practices and what these practices mean to them, consequently gaining insight into how these children perceive themselves. In summary, the language socialization approach led me to focus on children’s peer interaction and to examine how cultural and linguistic minority children share cultural meaning.

*Interpretive Reproduction Approach to Peer Culture*

The interpretive reproduction framework supported my inquiry into how children’s peer groups are associated with culture and language at a micro level. This approach falls in line with the perspective of cultural psychology, according to which “children are active constituents of their own cultures and that changes in individuals initiate changes in their relations with others and thus in their immediate cultural settings” (Shweder et al., 1998, p. 896).

Corsaro and his colleagues have contributed richly to the existing frameworks conceptualizing children’s peer cultures (e.g., Corsaro, 1997; Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Corsaro & Molinari, 2005; Corsaro et al., 2003; Corsaro & Nelson, 2003; Corsaro & Rosier, 1992; Gaskins et al., 1992). In particular, they proposed the notion *interpretive reproduction* in order to highlight children’s creative appropriation of the adult world and to capture children’s contribution to cultural production.

*Basic Premises of the Interpretive Reproduction Approach*

An interpretive reproduction approach has three basic premises. First, this approach supports the idea that child development is interdependent with the cultural contexts in which a child is situated. Gaskins and her colleagues (1992) pointed out that a universal principle of development based on the middle-class European American cannot be applied to children from
different subcultures in the United States. Like cultural psychologists (e.g., Bruner, 1996; Greenfield, 2000; Rogoff, 2003; Shweder et al., 1998), scholars using the interpretive reproduction approach emphasize that children must be understood in relation to the culture in which they are situated.

Second, meaning making in the dynamic cultural process occurs “not only from child to child but from time to time for one child” (Gaskins et al., 1992, p. 12). Through ongoing participation in cultural routines and practices, children create their own culture in a local cultural context and contribute to the larger culture. This premise reiterates the view of children as active agents and the dynamic nature of cultural processes emphasized by cultural psychologists. In other words, children not only construct their own cultural meanings with other peers beyond mere imitation of the adult world, but they also contribute to the production of culture. Through adult-child interactions, children are often exposed to socio-cultural knowledge, and they appropriate information from the adult world. Yet, the appropriation of information is not just “the private internalization of adult skills and knowledge” (Corsaro & Eder, 1990, p. 199). Children creatively reproduce the information for the activities and routines making up peer culture (Corsaro, 1985, 1992, 1997; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990a; Gaskins et al., 1992).

In particular, Corsaro and his colleagues (Corsaro, 1997; Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1988; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990a; Corsaro & Rosier, 1992; Gaskins et al., 1992) argued that the interpretive approach embraces both “a matter of adaptation and internalization” and “a process of appropriation, reinvention, and reproduction” (Corsaro, 1997, p. 18). Beyond understanding individual child’ internalization of knowledge, Corsaro and Eder (1990) emphasized that shared meaning is not only an individual process but also a collective process. To elaborate, they explained the productive-reproductive process:
The process is interpretive in the sense that children do not merely individually internalize the external adult culture. Rather children become a part of adult culture and contribute to its reproduction through their negotiations with adults and their creative production of a series of peer cultures with other children. (p. 201)

Third, language and cultural routines are regarded as the primary tools for understanding different developmental pathways in different cultural communities. Language and cultural routines in the interpretive reproduction model fit nicely into both the view of language in language socialization and the view of cultural practices in cultural psychology. Corsaro (1985) articulated the importance of language to children’s participation in their culture: “Language and discourse become the most critical tool for the child's construction of the social world, because it is through language that social action is generated” (p. 74). He also offered the following argument:

Language is central to children’s participation in their culture both as a “symbolic system that encodes local, social, and cultural structure” and as “a tool for establishing (that is, maintaining, creating) social and psychological realities” (Ochs, 1988, p. 210). These interrelated features of language and language use are “deeply embedded and instrumental in the accomplishment of the concrete routines of social life (Schieffelin, 1990, p. 19).” (1997, p. 19)

According to Corsaro’s argument, the language used by children can provide clues to the beliefs and values held by a certain group or community and can also contribute to the construction of shared meaning making. Corsaro’s view on language meshes with the language socialization approach; scholars of language socialization have attempted to recognize taken-for-granted cultural values by examining the micro-practices of socialization within local and larger
cultures (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004). Corsaro’s notion of peer culture conceptualizes socialization as a process in both local and larger cultures and sees peer culture as a type of children’s socialization.

In addition, cultural routines as “recurrent and predictable activities” (Corsaro, 1992, p. 163) can be defined as mechanisms which provide children with frames through which they can understand sociocultural knowledge embedded in taken-for-granted routines. Such cultural routines “provide children and all social actors with the security and shared understanding of belonging to a social group” (Corsaro, 1997, p. 19). Corsaro (1992) also noted that framing is one important element of cultural routines. Drawing on Goffman’s (1974, 1981) work, he showed the primary frameworks of particular groups to be representative of underlying knowledge and interpretation which consequently influence the production of cultural routines (as cited in Corsaro, 1992). In this sense, the cultural routines studied by Corsaro are connected to the cultural practices emphasized in cultural psychology (e.g., Rogoff, 2003; Miller & Goodnow, 1995; Shweder et al., 1998).

*The Nature of Children’s Peer Culture*

In the study, I adopted Corsaro’s definition of peer culture. Corsaro (1997) defined *peer culture* as “a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers” (p. 95). He also identified the central themes of children’s peer culture. He argued, “Children make persistent attempts to gain control of their lives and to share that control with each other” (Corsaro & Eder, 1990, p. 202).

The characteristics of peer culture can be broadly divided into two categories corresponding to relationships with adults and other children. First, adopting Goffman’s (1961) notion of *secondary adjustments* (as cited in Corsaro, 1997, p. 42), Corsaro (1985, 1997)
suggested that children control their lives collaboratively by resisting adult authority or rules. This collective resistance against adult control helps children develop and maintain a group identity or “we-ness.” Second, within their peer groups, children share their routines and rituals by “doing things together” (Corsaro, 1997, p. 123). At the same time, they experience conflict and compete with each other. Conflicts among peers strengthen peer culture through a negotiation process. For example, Corsaro’s (1997) study showed that conflicts among Italian children also presented opportunities for these children to exert control over their lives. In peer culture, children want to keep their interactive space, where they “keep sharing what they are already sharing and see others as a threat to the community they have established” (p. 124). The protection of interactive space is related to how children recognize social differentiation and similarities and how they understand themselves through this process. At the same time, recognition of social differentiation and similarities is also explicitly or implicitly influenced by adults’ values and dominant societal norms. Therefore, the interpretive reproduction approach, as explained by Corsaro and his colleagues, also contributed to my study by helping me pay attention to the voices of children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds through a micro-level analysis.

In short, by drawing on cultural psychology, language socialization, and interpretive reproduction approaches, I was able to analyze how Korean-American children negotiate their values, beliefs, and practices through their interactions with each other. Cultural psychology serves to elucidate the interdependence between human development and culture and human beings’ construction and sharing of meaning in the cultural process. It provides insights into how the children who have dual cultural identities are engaged in cultural processes. The cultural psychological view of language as a vehicle for meaning making and identify formation is
critical to understanding bilingual children’s use of different languages inside and outside of schools. A language socialization framework and an interpretive production model supplement and address the lack of specific focus on children’s language and peer culture in the framework of cultural psychology. The language socialization framework provided me with the possibility of studying Korean-American children’s language socialization by focusing on child-child interactions. The interpretive reproduction model allowed me to develop an in-depth contextual understanding of the nature of Korean-American children’s peer cultures and how these children’s peer cultures reveal their understanding of themselves and others.

**Literature Review**

In the following literature review section, I first review the dominant topics explored in relation to peer interactions, such as gender and race/ethnicity of peer culture, by focusing on studies conducted with ethnographic and anthropological orientations. Second, I discuss the ways in which current literature has studied children’s agency by focusing on the culture and language of peer groups. Finally, I describe existing studies of Korean and Korean-American children at heritage language schools.

*Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Peer Culture and Peer Interaction*

**Gender**

Because gender interaction and identity are highly salient issues in the area of peer culture, gender differentiation in peer interactions has been documented in many studies (Aydt & Corsaro, 2003; Corsaro, 1997; Hughes, 1993; Moore, 2002). Researchers have explored how children’s masculinity and femininity are shown in peer cultures. Keddie (2003, 2004) found that peer culture strongly shapes boys’ understandings of masculinity. From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, she argued that boys between the ages of six and eight possess peer
masculinities as strong as those of secondary school students. In her studies, boys were positioned hierarchically in peer groups according to their collective understanding of masculinity as interrelated with physical strength and winning, such as being good at football. Aydt and Corsaro (2003) also acknowledged that gender is an instrument for classifying and excluding others in a peer culture. However, through cross-cultural analysis from two daycares in the United States and two preschools in Italy, they found that gender differentiation in peer culture is not the same across cultural groups. Italian children were more likely than American children to participate in cross-gender play, and less likely to do gender borderwork to establish gender boundaries.

Researchers have also documented interactive characteristics within gender differentiated peer group socialization. Gendered speaking has been recognized in peer interactions as a distinct dichotomous frame (e.g., aggressive and competitive boys’ talk vs. cooperative and passive girls’ talk) (Goodwin, 2002; Hughes, 1993; Kyratzis, 2001). Differences in peer interactions related to gender identity occur across cultural groups. Sheldon (1996) found that White middle-class American preschool girls use the indirect interactive skill of double-voice discourse (e.g., “yes, but”) to manage conflicts in peer cultures. However, researchers realize that this conflict management technique of children is not universal (Aydt & Corsaro, 2003; Goodwin, 1990; Kyratzis, 2001; Kyratzis & Guo, 2001; Sheldon, 1996). Investigating children’s talk in specific contexts, Goodwin (1990) found that African American girls aged 9 to 14 were actively engaged in a competent and hierarchical arrangement, as were African American boys. Similarly, Kyratzis and Guo (2001) found that Chinese preschool girls in China used more assertive talk in the same-sex and some cross-sex contexts than did American girls. Chinese boys used less assertive talk than did American boys in their same-sex and cross-sex groups. The
researchers suggested that these differences between American and Chinese children might be attributable to different cultural values. In Chinese society, group maintenance is taken for granted. In such a situation, the boys “do not have to work hard to maintain group boundaries” (p. 65).

Farris (1991) also approached gender differentiation with a focus on cultural differences. He found Taiwanese preschool girls used direct and aggressive speech styles with boys. Yet, in his study, the girls still kept their feminine talk style. In particular, Farris pointed out that Taiwanese girls’ speech reflects the communication styles of Sajiao in Chinese culture. Sajiao, a style of pleading, is primarily used by children or women when the listener is unwilling to yield. Goodwin (1990) observed that girls participating in role-play mimic their mothers in their use of directives to other children. The finding showed that children reflect their home culture through language. These studies suggest that adults’ values influence gender differences in children’s interactions (Devine & Kelly, 2006; Farris, 1991; Kyratzis, 2004). Aydt and Corsaro (2003) also posited that although gender in peer culture is influenced by adult culture, children still construct meaning with respect to gender identity in their own peer culture. They argued that children socialize with and are socialized by peers in different ways than in adult-child language socialization. In summary, children’s gender differentiation and gender identity varies across cultural groups. Therefore, as Goodwin (2002) observed, simply categorizing children’s interactions and peer culture as gender differentiation can prevent researchers from seeing the nature of children’s peer culture.

**Race and Ethnicity**

To date, Corsaro’s (1985, 1997, 2005) work on peer culture has rarely considered the influence of children’s cultural backgrounds or racial and ethnic identities (Lee & Walsh, 2003;
Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996, 2001). Recently, studies on how race and ethnic identities emerge in children’s interactions have begun to show up in the literature on peer culture.

Van Ausdale and Feagin (1996, 2001), for example, examined how children in a culturally and linguistically diverse preschool understand racial and ethnic concepts and how they carry them out in social interactions. They argued that children recreate and reshape racial-ethnic identities and norms in everyday language and practice by gathering pre-existing racial and ethnic concepts in the adult world. They found that children often sophisticatedly used racial and ethnic concepts to include and exclude others in peer groups, and that children shared different language use as a means of exclusion or inclusion in peer groups. Lee and Walsh (2003) also acknowledged the importance of a shared language among culturally and linguistically diverse children for the construction of peer groups. They found that children’s peer groups in a culturally and linguistically diverse after-school program were affected by nationality and language more than by race. They also argued that research on children’s peer groups focusing “on race and/or ethnicity in a multicultural and multilingual diverse setting overlooks other important contexts influencing their peer relationships and lives” (p. 214).

Devine and Kelly (2006) investigated how both gender and race identity mediated peer interactions. According to the study, children in a multi-ethnic Irish primary school experienced dynamic inclusion and exclusion based on cultural, physical, and linguistic characteristics. Using sociometric analysis, the researchers found that over time the boys’ interaction patterns changed to allow inter-ethnic mixing. However, the girls’ inter-ethnic mixing patterns evidenced early in the school year changed into a distinct polarization of majority and minority girls by the study’s end. In particular, a newly arrived minority girl was excluded from the majority girls because of
different femininity norms. High ability in sports and in academics played important roles in the admission of culturally and linguistically different children into peer groups.

Similarly, Moore (2002) elaborated on children’s dynamic exclusion and inclusion based on racial practices in two different summer day camps for 6 to 12 year olds. One was a typical camp predominantly populated by European American children and a few African American children. The other was a cultural awareness camp aimed at fostering cultural diversity; this camp’s participants were mostly African American children, but Latinos and Asian Americans were also present. Focusing on older age children, Moore found that children at the two camps used gender and race differently to categorize other children. The children at the typical camp tended to align themselves into gendered racial groups, such as a group of European American girls or a group of European American boys, reflecting the silence about race held by the adult staff at the camp. They reinforced their peer groups “by verbally marking some race boundaries [frequently asking ‘who are you?’ to African-American children] and leaving others unmarked, unarticulated.” (p. 65). In contrast, race was used more saliently for categorizing children’s peers at the cultural awareness camp in that “the social significance and meaning of race was more explicitly arbitrary and open to negotiation” (p. 75) in that peer culture.

Findings across existing studies are varied in terms of children’s reactions to race and ethnicity in their peer groups. One reason for this may be that race categorization and evaluation among children are mutually interrelated with other factors, such as gender, age, and language. Therefore, researchers need to be able to account for each factor as an integrated component of children’s peer cultures.
Children’s Agency in Culture and Language of Peer Groups

Many of the classic studies on peer culture (e.g., Corsaro, 1985, 1994) have also investigated children within the boundaries of a shared language and culture. Due to an increase in bilingual and multilingual settings in the United States, many researchers have begun to study children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds and non-native English speakers. Yet, few researchers have focused on how language differences among peers influence children’s social boundaries in the process of establishing and maintaining peer culture.

Although the socialization process of non-native English speakers has rarely been documented (Garcia-Sanchez, 2006), Feng, Foo, Kretschmer, Prendeville, and Elgas (2004) explored how Chinese immigrant children (two girls and one boy) with different levels of fluency in English created and maintained peer culture in a dominant English-speaking preschool. They found the children’s ability to gain entry and sustain play to be deeply associated with their ethnolinguistic boundaries. For example, a child whose English was not fluent mainly initiated interaction in Chinese. When the Chinese children used Chinese in play, then non-Chinese children were not allowed to participate. The girls who were more fluent than the boy in both languages served as gatekeepers to prevent others from interrupting their play. In a similar setting, Meyer and her colleagues (1994) studied four Korean girls who were born in Korea and were second language (English) learners in preschool. Throughout the school year, the Korean girls physically sat together, imitated English and behaviors of their Korean peers, and spoke in Korean across contexts, even talking over the teacher. Unlike typical second language learners, they interacted with their non-Korean peers. The findings indicate that a shared language and cultural heritage is a crucial resource for engaging in a new setting.
While Meyer and her colleagues (1994) shed light on the agency available to second language learners for socialization and learning, Garcia-Sanchez (2006) showed the empowerment of children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds through their peer interactions on a school playground. Garcia-Sanchez observed five non-native English speakers (three girls and two boys) playing hopscotch and focused on their interactional and socializing practices. She found that despite their limited knowledge of a second language, non-native English speakers socialized one another into using appropriate language and used interactional practices during the game to instruct each other on the appropriate treatment of others. In addition, the children collaboratively learned new rules from each other and acquired English through the repetition and mimicking of words.

Other researchers have focused on the processes of language change, shift, and maintenance. Paugh (2005) examined a group of Dominican children’s choice of English as their official language and Patwa in their imaginary play. These children showed their ability to “negotiate and navigate through the spatial (home, yard, or school) and temporal (when adults are present or during school) restrictions placed on their language use” (p. 69). For instance, the children tended to use much more Patwa than English in role playing situations (such as pretending to be parents), while they tended to speak in English during school play (pretending to be students and teachers). This study highlights children’s agency in that not only do they reflect the position of English in the adult world in a formal school setting, but they also actively participate in language practices. In a similar vein, Bourne (2001) found that Bengali and Cantonese bilingual children at a multi-lingual primary classroom in Britain did not simply shift their English and mother tongues. Instead, they constructed, maintained, and reproduced meanings within different discursive practices depending on their spatial and social location.
Korean/Korean-American Children in Heritage Language Schools

Until recently, most studies of children’s interactions have been conducted in school settings. Few studies have focused on young children in non-formal classroom contexts, and even fewer researchers have studied children at heritage language schools. However, as Hull and Schultz (2001) pointed out, the false dichotomy of distinction between in-school and out-of-school settings can result in losing valuable accounts:

We may, then, fail to see the presence of school-like practice at home . . . or non-school-like activities in the formal classroom. Such contexts are not sealed tight or boarded off; rather, one should expect to find, and should attempt to account for, movement from one context to the other. (p. 577)

Nonetheless, studying heritage language schools as a non-formal school context remains important because the context reflects the values and beliefs held by cultural and linguistic minority groups and is an aspect of those children’s lives. The history of heritage language learning in the United States has coincided with the increasing number of non-Western European immigrants (Wang, 1996; Webb, 2000; Wiley & Valdés, 2000). Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Korean cultural groups, among others, have community-based weekend or after-school heritage programs (Chao, 1996; Cho, 2000; Lee, 2002; Siegel, 2004; Wang, 1996). Most heritage schools are constructed, staffed, and led by volunteers within the cultural community itself. They generally operate outside the formal education system and procure resources (e.g., teachers, materials, and school buildings) from the immediate cultural community (Wang, 1996).

The common goals of heritage schools are language and heritage culture maintenance. Although a lack of administrative support in terms of resources can decrease students’ respect and learning motivations (Draper & Hicks, 2000), heritage language schools allow immigrants to
teach their heritage culture and language. For example, Cho (2000) and Shibata (2000) found that the heritage schools play an important role in the teaching of language and the sharing of ethnic values and identity. Siegel (2004) found that Japanese parents expected their children to be exposed to a Japanese cultural and linguistic environment and to become bilinguals. He (1997) found that heritage language schools instructed Chinese children not only in the learning of the Chinese language, but these schools also taught them “what [the teacher] prefers as appropriate action, what roles are possible…what counts as appropriate, acceptable, and legitimate classroom activity” (p. 218). Jia (2006) examined how cultural values are transmitted among teachers, parents, and children in their social interactions at a Chinese heritage language school. She also found that Chinese parents and teachers encouraged their children to behave and speak in Chinese ways.

Similarly, Korean Americans also face the challenges of being members of a heritage cultural group as well as being Americans (Cho, 2000; Bae, 2003; Park, 2005). Korean immigrant parents want their children to maintain Korean culture while adjusting successfully into American culture (Min, 2000; Park, 2005). In the Korean ethnic community, most Korean language schools are affiliated with Korean Catholic or Christian churches (Min, 1992, 2000). However, other non-church-related Korean language schools also exist and provide Korean language and cultural maintenance. According to Overseas Korean Foundation (2007), there are more than 1,000 Korean language schools spread out across the United States. However, despite this large number of heritage language schools, few researchers have inquired into their impact. Wang (1996) pointed out that little attention has been paid to the organization and operation of heritage language schools in the United States. Only a few studies examine how children learn heritage languages and how heritage languages are taught in the heritage language schools.
(Curdt-Christiansen, 2006), and even fewer studies focus on what children share and negotiate with each other, how children construct their social and cultural knowledge among peer groups in heritage language schools, and what such knowledge means to them.

By attending heritage language schools outside of the formal U.S. education system, children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds learn cultural values and practices outside of the home, yet within an extended home context. Heritage language schools also allow children to interact with different peer groups in a non-formal school context. Therefore, heritage language schools are important in understanding the lives of children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds.

Noticeably, existing research on Korean/Korean-American children in heritage language schools does not pay attention to the negotiation of the socialization process which occurs among children’s peer groups. Instead, much of the existing literature has looked closely at the teacher-student relationship in heritage language schools and the influence of adults on children’s cultural knowledge transformations. Chung (2002) conducted one of the few studies of young children at a Korean heritage language school. In his study, he observed five young Korean immigrants at home, at a Korean heritage language school, and in ESL or regular classrooms. Comparing the different conditions for building American peer groups and Korean peer groups, he examined how the students became acculturated to American society and how they constructed their social identities. Despite his attempt to research children in a multitude of contexts, he overlooked the fact that the children specifically negotiated and shaped their peer cultures through interactions with American and Korean peers.

In addition, Bae (2003) studied how the Korean and Korean-American children (3rd-4th graders) of three families of graduate students negotiated their unique Korean-American identity.
Using autoethnographic narrative inquiry, she asked parents and children to relate their own stories of their ethnic and cultural identity and observed the children both in the Korean language classroom and at home. Drawing on Wenger’s (1998) notion of identity—“participation and reification” (p. 63), she found that the children constructed and manifested multiple identities in their home and at the heritage language school in response to their interactions with others and their negotiation between English and Korean. Through this study, she argued that language proficiency, family situation, and parental authority all influenced children’s identity. One limitation in Bae’s study is that although she described how peer interactions influenced children’s co-construction of their identities, she still focused more on parental influence on children’s socialization processes and identity formation than on the effect of peer groups. Park (2005) also studied how children perceive their learning of the Korean language and how the Korean language school plays a role in language maintenance, biliteracy, and construction of a Korean identity. She found that the children associated Korean identity with the Korean language.

In terms of Korean language socialization, some researchers have examined children at a Korean heritage language school. By examining teacher-child interactions at three Korean heritage language schools in Hawaii, Byon (2003) found that the use of the sentence-ending particle “yo” as an honorific for politeness was emphasized in the teacher-child interactions. Sometimes teachers asked children to use it, while other times children used it voluntarily. Byon explained that “yo” is a marker of Korean language socialization. Lo (2004) examined how a teacher in a Korean heritage language school attempted to socialize children based on Korean social norms. The studies of Byon (2003) and Lo (2004) attempted to elucidate what happens in a Korean heritage language school and how Korean language socialization occurs in this context.
However, these researchers both overlooked the importance of child-child interaction and peer culture.

Despite the recent increase in studies of children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds, we still know little about how they construct and maintain their peer cultures, or how children’s interactions from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds reflect both their own peer cultures and the larger culture surrounding them. The paucity of literature regarding these children’s peer culture as it relates to peer interactions comes from an overall lack of recognition of children’s ability to construct peer culture and negotiate meanings. In addition, although some researchers (e.g., Corsaro, 1994; Corsaro & Nelson, 2003) have provided insight on peer cultures in different contexts (e.g., American and Italian), they have not considered how children belonging to different contexts construct their peer culture. By examining peer cultures across different contexts including outside school settings, we can better understand how children construct their peer cultures and negotiate with peers.

Therefore, while this study acknowledges the contributions of these existing studies, it attempts to fill gaps in the literature by focusing on minority children’s peer culture outside of the formal school context.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

“The truth is that we must never take for granted that what we take for granted is known to others.” (Hymes, 1996, p. 208)

Ethnography

Researchers face many challenges in the study of children because studying children relates not only to what is studied but also how it is carried out (Christensen & James, 2000; O’Kane, 2000). Ethnography was an appropriate methodology for this study of Korean-American children’s dynamic peer cultures as it allowed me to enter “in[to] . . . [their] life routines,” to develop “ongoing relations with the people” in the study, and to observe “all the while what is going on” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 2). I used this ethnographic approach to examine how Korean-American children interact with each other and what they share within their own peer groups. Through thick description (Geertz, 1973) of Korean-American children’s lives at a Korean heritage language school, I tried to understand the cultural practices and values embedded in Korean-American children’s peer interactions and peer culture.

Ethnography was conceptualized and practiced by early anthropologists as a form of fieldwork (Preissle & Grant, 2004), and it systematically describes the lives of cultural groups. Ethnography’s basic goal of studying the nature and culture of certain groups (Patton, 2002) “bring[s] the importance of lived experience in a cultural place to the center of attention, transforming it from ground to figure” (Greenfield, 1997, p. 319). By looking closely at a certain group of people, ethnography helps researchers capture the specific, every day lives of
participants (Corsaro, 2006; Gaskin et al., 1992). In particular, Corsaro (2006) recommended ethnography as a methodology that provides a foundation for identifying the characteristics of children’s interactions and peer culture: “Ethnography is an excellent method for studying young children because many features of their interactions and peer cultures are produced and shared in the present and cannot easily be obtained by way of interviews, surveys, or experiments” (p. 97).

Through extensive participation in “shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some groups of people” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, pp. 2-3) and without manipulating the settings where behaviors occur naturally, an ethnographic approach helped me observe and understand Korean-American children’s worlds. My experience using ethnographic methods was similar to that of James (2001), who upheld ethnography as a methodology for studying children:

Ethnography . . . allows children to be seen as competent informants about and interpreters of their own lives and of the lives of others and is an approach to childhood research which can employ children’s own accounts centrally within the analysis. (p. 250)

Ethnographic research is flexible in that researchers experience continual inquiries emerging from research processes and move back and forth between insider and outsider positions (Corsaro, 2006; Gaskins et al., 1992). In this vein, Christensen (2004) defined ethnography as “a distinct type of research where the knowledge that is produced depends on the researcher taking part in close social interaction with informants over extensive periods of time” (p. 166).

**Researcher’s Subjectivity and Positionality**

As Rogoff (2003) articulated, “cultural researchers usually aspire to use both the insider and outsider perspective” (p. 31). While ethnographers have traditionally studied cultural groups
outside of their home culture, many researchers have recently acknowledged the “meaningfulness of [choosing] familiar cultural sites” for their research (Alexander, 2003, p. 108). To some degree this study was conducted in a cultural context familiar to me, as my cultural heritage is the same as that of the participants and their families.

As a native Korean researcher, I initially hesitated to study Korean-American children in a Korean community because I thought that I might not be able to examine the cultural beliefs and practices that I shared with my participants sensitively and critically. As Peshkin (1988) noted, “whatever the substance of one’s persuasions at a given point, one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and nonresearch aspects of our life” (p. 17). I worried that an unawareness of my subjectivity could negatively influence my research.

Yet I admit that my initial hesitance came from a lack of understanding of the researcher’s blurred and ambiguous positionality in a research context. Scholars (e.g., Griffith, 1998; Kusow, 2003; Merton, 1972; Villenas, 1996) have noted that a researcher’s positionality cannot be clearly and simply defined as either insider or outsider. Instead, a researcher moves “back and forth across different boundaries” (Griffith, 1998, p. 368) and is “an insider in a particular local situation but an outsider in another” (Kusow, 2003, p. 597). Sherif (2001) claimed that “the partial insiders who have background ties to the cultures being studied provide a certain insight into the dynamics that can occur in the research process” (p. 438). Therefore, I, as a researcher in the study, was partly an insider and partly an outsider.

As a Korean adult living, working, and studying in the United States since 2003, I have both retained my Korean heritage and absorbed American culture to some degree. Like many Korean immigrant caregivers whom I met through this study, I have faced challenges due to
language barriers and differing cultural values. In addition to having experiences specific to my identity as a member of a cultural and linguistic minority, my gender positioned me squarely as an insider relative to the Korean immigrant caregivers in this study. As a female researcher, I listened to and empathized with the experiences of the caregivers as daughters, wife, and mother in their family. My shared religion with the participants, Roman Catholicism, also influenced my status in the study. While my age positioned me as an outsider with the Korean-American children, I was an insider with those children in that I also have been engaged in two cultural communities in my daily life: I have interactions with mainstream Americans within the university context, and I socialize and interact more with Koreans or Korean-Americans outside of school.

These dual perspectives allowed me to observe the Korean-American children’s peer cultures carefully. In addition, I, as a member of a Korean ethnic community in the United States, was positioned to overcome “epistemological racism—a tenet of Western positivistic research that marginalizes the worldviews of mononaries and people of color” (Alridge, 2003, p. 29) and instead to amplify Korean-American children’s marginalized voices.

In this vein, ethnography is “doubly attractive for the qualitative child-centered and culturally sensitive insights” (Yon, 2003, p. 12). It served as a suitable methodology by which I fruitfully studied both the perspectives of the Korean-American children and their caregivers, and the ways in which the children co-constructed social and cultural knowledge with their peers.

**Gaining Entry**

In September 2006 to May 2007, I conducted my pilot study as a course work project with research questions similar to this study at a Korean language school within a university
town. In August 2007, I revisited the Korean language school that served as a research site for my pilot study in order to confirm it as a research site for my dissertation. However, I found that the total number of registered children was about seven, and only one of my previous participants was registered. The school building itself was under construction, and thus the environment was unsuitable for further study. Thus I began looking for a new research site with more diverse population of Korean immigrant children. The metropolitan areas in which many Korean-Americans and Korean immigrants have lived and run their own businesses were attractive to me, and I started to search for Korean language schools in the areas. Soon, I found St. Clare Church\(^1\), a Korean Catholic church located in the Peace community, which has a rapidly growing Korean immigrant population. Fortunately, the school director of the Korean church whom I contacted was Fr. Shin. I had met with him before when he had visited a Catholic center in my university town.

Three weeks after school started in September 2007, I visited the Church in order to gain permission for my study with a brief explanation of what my study would look like. Fr. Shin introduced me to Mrs. Hong, the school coordinator, who was in charge of the school curriculum. I also met Miss Cho, the pre-kindergarten classroom lead teacher at the Korean heritage language school, who had been already informed about my research agenda by Fr. Shin and Mrs. Hong. Miss Cho seemed hesitant to allow me to begin my research in her classroom because she felt uncomfortable with being observed. However, after I explained to her that my focus would be more on the children’s interactions than on her instruction, she opened her classroom to me.

\(^1\) All names of places and participants used in the study are pseudonyms.
Entering the Children’s Worlds: Relationships with the Participants

Due to a lack of human resources in the heritage language school, the director and coordinator of the school first asked me to be an assistant teacher while I conducted my study. However, I did not want to have the formal title of “assistant teacher” because the authority of the position could interfere with my entry into the children’s world. The power relationship between a researcher and children must be carefully and cautiously negotiated (Christensen, 2004; Corsaro, 1985; Fine & Sandstrom, 1988). As Corsaro (1985) illustrated, “becoming a participant in the children’s activities was necessary to gain insight into what mattered most to them in their everyday interaction in the school” (p. 28). Therefore, I wanted to gain entry into and participate in the children’s world by minimizing my given authority and power as an adult with Corsaro’s “reactive entry strategy” (p. 28). With this strategy, Corsaro entered children’s play areas and waited for children to initiate interactions with him. Unlike typical adults, he did not attempt “(a) to initiate or terminate an episode, (b) to repair disrupted activity, (c) to settle disputes, or (d) to coordinate or direct activity” (p. 32). Instead, he “[became] part of the activity without affecting the nature or flow of peer episodes” (p. 32). He gained entry by placing himself in a peripheral position from which he nevertheless participated in the children’s world. After I explained my role as a researcher and my proposed use of Corsaro’s reactive entry strategy, the school staff withdrew their request for me to have the title of “assistant teacher.”

During my initial hour-long observation, I stayed in a corner of the classroom. No adult introduced me or acknowledged my presence as a researcher. Likewise, none of the children asked who I was. Some children, however, assumed that I was one of the teachers, saying, “Teacher, Can I do this?” I replied to them, “I’m not a teacher. Please ask your teacher.” The children seemed puzzled by my presence. For example, one girl said, “Uh? Then, who are
It was easy for the children to mis-identify me as a teacher in the beginning stage of the study. The fact that they had their classes just twice at the Korean language school when I started observing them reinforced this initial assumption. Two weeks later I asked the children who I was. The children seemed to have difficulty in defining my position and role. They did not know what I did in the classroom or why I was there. So I told them, “I just come here to see what you do and what you talk to each other about.” Over time, the children came to recognize my role as a researcher who observed and recorded their interactions and actions. For example, they often asked me what I was doing when I took field notes and videotaped them at the beginning of the study. Later, those questions became less frequent and some children even explained to newcomers what I would be doing in the classroom.

The children often limited my access to their play, recognizing my presence as an adult researcher in the classroom, particularly when they played with each other in a playhouse in the classroom. For example, when I walked to the playhouse, the children often distinguished me as an adult different from them, saying, “This is for babies” (Field notes, Myungwoo’s utterance, 01/27/2008). The children prevented me from entering the playhouse, but allowed their peers’ access as shown in the following vignette:

Field notes: 01/13/2008

Jessica, Kyuwon, Junsung, and Hyonmin are in the playhouse. Jessica pulls a soft drink bottle from her bag, and other children watch her. I move to the playhouse with my camera and try to watch them. Hyonmin says to me, “You can’t come in.” I ask, “Then, is it OK to watch you from outside? I’m not coming in.” Hyonmin permits it, nodding his head. While I talk with Hyonmin, Yongjae enters the playhouse. No one resists his entry.

2 All Korean words spoken by the participants in the study were transcribed into English and are given in italics.
Unlike Yongjae, I, as an adult researcher, had limited access to the playhouse. This often happened to the teachers as well. The children often said, “You, teacher, can’t come in!” Scholars have noted that adult researchers inadvertently influence children’s activities (e.g., Christensen, 2004; Corsaro, 1981; Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; Lee, 2006). The children in this study were aware of my adult status, and I was “very easily . . . seen by the children as intimidating and overpowering” (Christensen, 2004, p. 169).

The fact that Korean culture (based on Confucianism) highly values respect for and obedience to older people challenged my access to the children’s world even further, although I tried to play the least-adult role possible during my study, as suggested by Corsaro (1985). I had to keep in mind that the hierarchical relationship between adults and children in Korean culture would influence the Korean-American children’s perception of my role in the study. Many researchers (e.g. Corsaro, 1985; Mandell, 1991) have noted that the adult researcher’s dominant status and authority does not come just from his or her physical size. I realized that vertical relationships between adults and children, more valued in Korean culture than in the Western culture, should be considered an influential contextual factor in this study of Korean-American children. Kim and Tuirel (1996) supported the idea that Korean children are more aware of adult status than American children are, in that “Korean children are willing to accept commands of adults who do not hold social positions in a particular context” (p. 326). Although Korean society has changed over time, Korean people, including children, still hold this traditional Korean value (Kim & Tuirel, 1996).

As a cultural practice reflecting the vertical relationship between children and adults, Korean children are not allowed to call an adult by her first name because it is considered rude. Instead, it is considered appropriate to address an adult by her job title (e.g., teacher), by an
alternative title denoting the relationship (e.g., aunt), or by first or full name with a title (e.g., teacher Jinhee Kim, aunt Jinhee). Even teachers in the classroom always addressed each other as “teacher” instead of using each other’s first names.

Thus, I realized that the least-adult role could not be fully applied to my study without considering Korean cultural values and practices which influenced the children’s perceptions of me. Ting (1995) noted that the Chinese teacher in her study asked children to call Ting “aunt” instead of her name, so as to follow a Chinese cultural practice. Similarly, Lee (2006) adjusted her position into aunt, so as to be considered a family member with less authority than parents and teachers in Korean culture. In this study, I, too, adopted a young “aunt (“Ea-Mo” in Korean)” position in order to occupy the least-adult position possible without denying my adult authority. In Korean culture, a young aunt is perceived as a person who maintains a close relationship with her nephews and nieces, is willing to play with them, and has less authority than other adult relatives do. Korean children are also often encouraged to call their mothers’ female friends “aunt,” reflecting the close relationships between their mothers and their mothers’ friends. For me, taking the position of a young aunt means that I did “not act like other adults” (Corsaro, 1981, p. 130) in the school. I tried to show the children that my adult authority was different from other adults in the school.

At my request, the teachers did not formally introduce me as an aunt to the children, but I attempted to present myself as an aunt when interacting with the children (e.g., “Ea-Mo (aunt) can’t climb the tube slides because I’m wearing a skirt”). The children seemed to recognize that I was quite a different adult from their teachers over time. Nonetheless, some children sometimes got confused and called me “teacher.” For example, Junsung called to me from the play house, “Teacher! Hyonmin didn’t give me a piece of candy. One more piece of candy, please.” I said to
Junsung, “Well, I’m not a teacher.” He immediately changed his words, saying, “Oh, right. Ea-
Mo (aunt)” (Field notes, 03/16/2008). He eventually perceived me as an adult who did “not act 
like other adults” (Corsaro, 1981, p. 130) over time. When he was waiting for his mother after 
the class on a later day, there were two teachers who arranged tables, a girl who was waiting for 
her mother, and me. Junsung told me, “There are five people [in the classroom]. Two are 
teachers” (Field notes, 04/20/2008).

As in relationships with the children, I also needed to consider Korean cultural values and 
practices in my relationships with the teachers. At the beginning of the study, I realized that the 
teachers called me “teacher” in the classroom because they were younger than me. They were 
hesitant to call me by my first name³. Recognizing their discomfort, I immediately asked them to 
call me “Unni⁴ (an older sister).” However, I asked them to refer me as “Ea-Mo (aunt)” when the 
children were around. This strategy helped me keep the least-adult role and prevent the children 
from recognizing me as a person who had the same adult authority as their teachers.

Due to Korean cultural practices, caregivers did not feel comfortable calling me by my 
name either. They just assigned the title of “teacher” to me, although I was introduced only as a 
researcher to them. For example, one day I met Joohee and her mother in the parking lot before 
the class began. Joohee’s mother asked Joohee to bow and greet me, “Hi, teacher” (Field notes, 
11/11/2007). Another day, Junsung brought his Spiderman toy. His mother pointed at me, saying, 
“Junsung, show it to the teacher” (Field notes, 02/10/2008). To prevent the caregivers from 
thinking of me as a teacher, I often had to emphasize my position as “aunt”. For example, I

³ Within Korean culture, age difference greatly influences the social relations of individuals and is connected to 
hierarchical relations.

⁴ “Unni” in Korean means “older sister,” but it is often used among girls or women as a term of endearment for other 
females outside their kinship.
replied back to Junsung, “OK, Ea-Mo wants to see it,” without directly asking his mother to correct my position.

Another challenge to keeping the least-adult role occurred when there were disputes among the children. My presence as an adult in the classroom seemed to give the caregivers the impression that I was also a member of the school who would and should take care of their children. In particular, the shared responsibility for caring and supervising the children with other adults, including neighbors, is part of traditional Korean culture. Although the teachers had primary responsibility for the children, I could not overlook the expectation that all adults, including caregivers and other parishioners of the Church the school was affiliated with, had a shared responsibility for the children attending the school. Although the teachers had the main authority for taking care of the children in the classroom, once caregivers or other adults entered the classroom for any reason (e.g., delivering snacks, asking questions), they were tacitly expected to intervene in certain situations, particularly serious conflicts among children. The teachers did not express discomfort when other adults intervened. The following incident, which occurred in the beginning of the study, shows how cultural expectations influenced my attempt to occupy a least-adult role, particularly in my relationships with adults in the study:

Field notes: 11/04/2007

Around class time, the children begin to enter the classroom with their caregivers. Some mothers drop their children off at the door. The lead teacher asks me to take care of the children for a few minutes while she goes to the office to pick up some teaching materials. Today the assistant teacher is absent. In the classroom, Joohee (Michelle) is crying at the table. Her mother stands next to her, folding her arms, saying nothing. She just waits for Joohee to stop crying, looking at her daughter and me in turn. I try to calm
down Joohee, talking about a kitty cat on her sweater while her mother watches us. Soon, Joohee stops crying and starts talking to other children. After confirming that Joohee is okay, her mother leaves the classroom, and soon the teacher returns.

At that moment I was the only adult except for Joohee’s mother, and she knew that I came to the classroom for my study. Nonetheless, I had to decide whether I should do something to soothe Joohee or to do nothing, which would go against Korean cultural norms. The cultural norms in the school, as shown the following vignette, forced me to negotiate my role:

Field notes: 11/18/2007

The heritage language class has just finished. Hyonmin’s mother says to the children, “Everybody line up.” The teachers are talking with other caregivers in the corner of the classroom. The children line up and move to the religious education class, which is located next door.

Hyonmin’s mother was one of the members in this school community who was responsible for helping the children move into the next classroom for religious education after the heritage language class. Sometimes other adults, including caregivers and other parishioners, did this job instead of her. Due to this school climate, I could not help but be a helper for classroom activities, such as arranging children’s chairs and helping children cut their construction paper, upon the request of the children or teachers.

Seeking an appropriate way to be immersed in the research context and to establish strong rapport with my participants, I tried to position myself as a young aunt who was considered a close relative to the children, a helper who sometimes supported classroom activities, and an observer who took notes and recorded children’s interactions and behaviors. In my relationships with other adults, however, there were unavoidable moments when I was
viewed as a teacher because of Korean cultural values and norms. My relationships with the participants and my roles in the school had to be constantly negotiated with consideration for cultural values and norms throughout the research period.

**Data Collection**

*Selection Procedure for Participants*

For the selection of participants, I used both “purposeful sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 230) and “criterion sampling” (p. 238), which involved targeting young Korean-American children outside of the formal school systems in order to study their peer culture. Fr. Shin allowed me to observe both a pre-kindergarten and a kindergarten classroom preliminarily on different days for one hour each. Through the two preliminary observations, I decided to choose children in the pre-kindergarten classroom as participants, because this grade level would allow me to study the children’s initial transition from home to school. In addition, the curriculum of the pre-kindergarten class was more flexible than that of the upper grade level. This flexibility helped me observe how children interacted with each other in the classroom.

After the first preliminary observation, I also observed a pre-kindergarten classroom in religion education. Although I did not intend to focus on the religious education program, I could not overlook this class because all my participants except one attended it. Therefore, the data collected in the pre-kindergarten religion education class was used as secondary data in this study.

In the first week of November 2008, I distributed the introductory letters about my research with consent forms (see Appendix A & B) to pre-kindergarten caregivers before and after the class when they came to drop off or pick up their children. Two mothers willingly and immediately signed the consent forms on the spot. Along with the introductory letter, I added
another letter in which I proposed meeting with caregivers to explain the study in detail (see Appendix E) and to build some initial connections with them. In the following week, only 4 caregivers of regularly attending children out of approximately 15 came to the meeting. One of the challenges I had in the beginning of the study was to find time to get to know caregivers. For example, some caregivers verbally agreed that they would participate in the study. Although I expected to receive consent forms from them, the caregivers and their children did not show up at the school in the next week. The school director, Fr. Shin, and the school coordinator, Mrs. Hong, fully understood these difficulties. They helped me identify potential participants for this study by posting two announcements in the church’s newsletter distributed to all parishioners. Finally, out of the 15 regular attendees of the pre-kindergarten classroom, I received consent forms from the caregivers of 11 children, including 7 boys and 4 girls (see Chapter 4 for details). These caregivers agreed that they and their children would participate in this study.

In addition to the ten caregivers, the two teachers (Miss Cho, the lead teacher, and Miss Jang, the assistant teacher) of the pre-kindergarten classroom, and the two school administrators (Fr. Shin, the school director, and Mrs. Hong, the school coordinator) at the heritage language school agreed to participate in interviews. I also interviewed Mrs. Lee, the pre-kindergarten classroom teacher in religious education, a mother of two children who had immigrated to the United States 7 years prior to the study (see Table 3.1). I expected that Mrs. Lee would provide insights into the participants’ interactions in a different setting. I easily received consent forms from the school teachers and administrators because they were willing to participate in observations and/or interviews for the study.

5 One caregiver had two children who attended the pre-kindergarten classroom at the heritage language school.
Table 3.1

*School Teachers and Staff Members as Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School director heritage language school and religious education</td>
<td>Fr. Shin</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School coordinator heritage language school</td>
<td>Mrs. Hong</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead teacher pre-kindergarten, heritage language class</td>
<td>Miss Cho</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant teacher pre-kindergarten, heritage language class</td>
<td>Miss Jang</td>
<td>Late 10s</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead teacher pre-kindergarten, religious education</td>
<td>Mrs. Lee</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Participant Observation*

As the primary method of this study, I documented Korean-American children’s peer interactions through participant observation. Used by many ethnographers, this method provides an excellent way to collect and interpret ethnographic data, as well as formulate new questions (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002; Emerson et al., 1995). Gans (1998) also espoused that participant observation is a useful method for studying minority groups: “Participant observation could supply empirical findings about little known or stereotyped populations, particularly those outside the mainstream” (p. 540). As Gans pointed out, using surveys and interviews relies on what people say and has the real risk of producing superficial understandings or misguided views of cultural practices.

As a participant observer, I collected data in the pre-kindergarten heritage language class by visiting the classroom weekly and spending one hour per visit for an academic year (see Table
3.2) from September 2007 to October 2008. Additionally, I spent one and a half hours per visit in the pre-kindergarten religious education class, as a secondary resource, in order to understand the children’s interactions in a different context. I focused on “local knowledge not simply on the basis of people’s talk but rather through their ‘talk-in-interaction,’ . . . that is . . . what people do in relation to others [other children and adults] in order to produce specific, situated meaning” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 133). I also had the opportunity to collect other secondary resources by observing the children at certain special events held inside (e.g., Korean Thanksgiving days and a graduation ceremony) and outside (e.g., children’s birthday parties and a Christmas party)6 of the heritage language school. These events helped me understand how the participants constructed their social and cultural knowledge with peers (see Table 3.2). The degree of my participation in the study setting can be categorized as moderate participation (Spradely, 1980) in general, although the degree of my participation in a specific context changed depending on the role that I had to play, ranging from observer to aunt (Ea-Mo) to helper throughout the research period.

6 The original study plan included observing children in additional contexts (e.g., home, places for extracurricular activities) in which they interacted with other children twice per month for 1 hour for a total of 15 sessions from November 2007 to May 2008. However, it was too difficult to schedule these observations and to gain permission from other, non-participant children and their caregivers. Instead, I tried to observe events, such as birthday parties and a Christmas party, during which many of the participant children gathered and interacted with each other.
Table 3.2

**Timeline of Data Collection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September, 2007 –</td>
<td>Initial contact with gatekeepers (the school director &amp; coordinator)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October, 2007</td>
<td>Preliminary observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gaining entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting used to the school/church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing rapport with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observing the pre-kindergarten classroom at the heritage language and religious education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collecting information about the curricula in the pre-kindergarten classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October, 2007 –</td>
<td>IRB Approval/ Official data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December, 2007</td>
<td>Participant observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School event and pre-kindergarten classroom observation at the heritage language and religious education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with the school director, coordinator, and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking their perspectives on heritage language school and Korean-American children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with caregivers I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video and audio recordings of children’s interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking photos of school bulletin boards and school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collecting artifacts such as school/church newsletters, copies of children’s work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January, 2008 –</td>
<td>Participant observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May, 2008</td>
<td>School event and pre-kindergarten classroom observation at the heritage language and religious education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with caregivers II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video and audio recordings of children’s interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking photos of school bulletin boards and school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collecting artifacts such as school/church newsletters, copies of children’s work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 2008 –</td>
<td>Participant observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October, 2008</td>
<td>School event and pre-kindergarten classroom observation at the heritage language and religious education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up interview with caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking about their perspectives on heritage language school and Korean-American children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video and audio recordings of children’s interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking photos of school bulletin boards and school events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collecting artifacts such as school/church newsletters, copies of children’s work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Field Notes

The children’s spontaneous interactions were recorded in my field notes. Verbal interactions were recorded as exactly as possible in field notes, and nonverbal interactions were jotted down as key events as well. I tried to elaborate on my field notes as “a method for capturing and preserving the insights and understanding” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 10) when returning to the writable moment. Field notes were written in a mix of English and Korean; the children’s direct utterances were recorded in the language spoken by them. In addition to the children’s direct utterances, other descriptions were also recorded in a notepad using a mix of English and Korean.

As part of the process of writing field notes and recording written data into an electronic database (Microsoft Word), I tried to move myself back and forth virtually in the field, freezing the scenes observed. Denzin (1996) stated, “Writing is interpretation and cannot be separated from the process of analysis. . . . Theory, writing, and ethnography are inseparable material practices” (p. 526). Through this process, I was also able to understand the relation between myself as a researcher and participants and between myself and the context. For me, writing field notes for data collection at the research site and developing field notes after coming back from the research site became part of the data analysis process. When I developed my field notes after observation, I also combined the transcripts of video and audio recordings into the field notes. This process of data recording and construction is described in detail in the next section of this chapter.

At the beginning of the study in particular, the children often asked questions about the notepad that I used for field notes. For example, in the first week some children looked curiously at me as I was jotting down their interactions and actions. They asked me what I was doing.
Others wanted me to allow them to write something on the notepad, using my pen; I gave them a piece of paper from the notepad and other pens or crayons.

*Video and Audio Recordings*

In addition to taking field notes, I recorded the participant children’s interactions with peers, teachers, and caregivers on one video camera and two audio recorders. From September 2007 to November 2007, I spent time observing my participants in the classroom, taking field notes. In December, 2007, I began using a digital video camera and two audio recorders. All digital recorders that I used had a function which enabled me to transform recordings into computer files directly, saving me time in organizing the data. Two digital audio recorders were used as supplementary equipment for capturing children’s spontaneous classroom interactions, which a digital video recorder alone could not do. The digital audio recorders were used with PZM microphones in order to maximize their capacity for capturing children’s voices. My original plan was to use wireless microphones, which could be attached to focus children’s clothing (e.g., Maclean, 1996; Maybin, 2006). In the first week, I put the wireless microphones in the children’s pockets or sleeves. However, the wireless microphones did not work for the study because the children felt uncomfortable wearing the equipment, and the quality of the recordings was not good due to the children’s dynamic movement. Instead, I put flat PZM microphones on the floor or tables to capture the children’s voices. Along with the video camera, PZM microphones captured the children’s interactions very effectively.

I tried to place myself and the video camera in spots where I could see all of the children at once when they worked as a whole group or played with each other in a classroom. Fortunately, this was possible because the classroom size was not too big. When the children played, I directed the video camera toward the interactions between particular children, while
still trying to capture all children. In order to overcome the limitation of the video camera being usually fixed in one spot, I placed two audio recorders with PZM microphones near the children in the classroom to capture their verbal interactions (see Figures 3.1 & 3.2). When I observed the children at special events held outside of the heritage language school, I used the video camera only. The total hours of video and audio recordings done for the study were 51.5 hours and 47.5 hours respectively (see Table 3.3).

![Diagram of video camera and audio recorder placements](image1)

*Figure 3.1 Example of a video camera and two audio-recorder placements at table settings (Field notes, 02/10/2008)*

- : Video camera  - : Audio recorder

![Diagram of video camera and audio recorder placements on carpet](image2)

*Figure 3.2 Example of a video camera and two audio-recorder placements on the carpet (Field notes, 02/17/2008)*
As Pink (2001) pointed out, “people in a video are always ‘people in a video’” (p. 79); video recordings are limited by the fact that video footage cannot include all the scenes and contents occurring at a given moment. Therefore, I did not rely solely on audio and video recordings, but incorporated other methods such as direct observation and field notes. Despite the limitations of video recording, however, I must acknowledge that the recordings helped me create a space to explore relations among data and to strengthen my interpretations with a variety of data sources (Flewitt, 2006).

Before videotaping children’s interactions in the classroom, three weeks were spent allowing the children to become familiar with the video camera and audio recorders. When the equipment was first introduced in the classroom, the children showed their interest only by glancing at or hanging around the video camera and audio recorders. From the second week, however, the children actively expressed their interest by having their picture taken by the video camera or by asking questions about its functions, as described in the following field notes:

Field notes/Video transcripts: 12/02/2007

While other children are working on their worksheets at the two tables, Kyuwon moves to the video camera and says to the other children, “I can see something. I can see you Philips.” Phillips goes over to Kyuwon and looks at the worksheets through the video camera, saying, “No, I don’t. I can see. I can see the paper.” Soon, Kyuwon runs back to his table and looks at Phillips, who is still looking through the video camera lens. Phillips says, “I can see you running.” A few seconds later, Phillips goes back to the table.

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7 Philips was not a participant boy in the study.
When I set up the camera, Hyonmin and Wonkyu come to me and walk around me. Myungwoo and Junsung are playing with toys on the carpet. Kyuwon is sitting down at one of the tables with two non-participant boys. Wonkyu, Boyong, and Hyonmin move around the classroom, watching me. When I move to the tables, Hyonmin goes to the camera and watches other children through the video camera, which is placed in a corner of the classroom. He giggles and says, “I gotta, I gotta see you.” When Yongjae is coming to Hyonmin, Hyonmin changes the angle of the camera toward the floor in order to capture his shoes, saying, “Let’s put feet on the floor.” Hyonmin gathers his legs at a spot under the tripod of the camera. Soon, Yongjae and Wonkyu follow him in turn.

Other children showed their interest in the PZM microphones attached to the digital audio recorders placed on tables. The children touched the microphones or moved them around on the table. For example, Jessica was very curious about these pieces of equipment, as described below:

Jessica is making sounds—“You, you”—toward the flat PZM microphone on the table. When Joohee (Michelle) tries to pick up the microphone, Jessica quickly grasps it and says, “Hello, hello, hello, yahhhhhhhhh.” Jessica notices that when she says something into the microphone, the wave of the audio recorder moves up and down. She says to Seonil and Joohee, “Look!” She looks at me and the lead teacher, saying, “I just watched…ahhhhhhh.” Jessica says to Seonil, “Your turn.” Seonil just smiles. Jessica immediately says to Seonil, “I said, not you.” She tells Joohee (Michelle), “Your turn.” Joohee also smiles and shakes her head no. Jessica says to them, “Why? . . . ahhhhhhhh. I
said, ‘Look at that [the wave of audio recorder]’ Ahhhhhhhhh. Ahhhhh. No more you guys.’

Because of their interest in the video camera in particular, some children tried to move the camera from the original spot to their favorite spots in the first few weeks that I started using the equipment. During these periods of time, there were even disputes among the children over the equipment. Some children even tended to monopolize the video camera. This was one of my dilemmas in that I did not know how much I should intervene in their disputes, considering the least-adult role suggested by Corsaro (1985) and my obligation as an adult to consider the children’s safety. I did not directly intervene in their conflicts or disputes, but asked the teachers to mediate these situations because I wanted to keep the “aunt” (Ea-Mo) position. There were a few times when the teachers directly intervened in the children’s conflicts toward the video camera without my request, as described in the following vignette:

Field notes: 12/16/2007
Jessica moves the video camera located in the corner of the classroom onto the carpet. Soon, Joohee and Soojung gather near Jessica. While Jessica points the camera at the alphabet letters embroidered on the carpet, three girls argue over who gets to see through the lens of camera first. After a few seconds, Toby (a non-participant boy) and Myungwoo come toward three girls. When the two boys try to take the video camera from the girls, the conflict over the camera escalates. The assistant teacher Miss Jang says to them, “If you guys fight, you can never play with it. OK. I’m gonna interview.” Miss Jang takes the camera and turns it toward the children, saying, “Hi. What is your name?” Then, Jessica sticks her tongue out. Miss Jang asks again, “Hi, what’s your name?” Instead of answering to the question, Jessica sticks her tongue out again. Miss Jang says
as she keeps watching the children through the video camera, “Hi, Jessica. Hi, Joohee. Hi, Myungwoo.” Soon, Junsung walks toward Miss Jang . . . Jessica shouts, “My turn! My turn!” Miss Jang says to everyone, “You don’t get your turn any more because you guys fight.” Miss Jang puts the camera back in the original spot, and the children just hang around the camera for a while.

Over time, the children seemed to accept that the equipment was part of the classroom setting. As Pink (2001) stated, “An ethnographer with a video camera is a person with a video camera, the camera becomes part of its user’s identity and an aspect of the way he or she communicates with others” (p. 79). Similarly, the children identified me as a person who brought the equipment into the classroom. For example, when I observed some children at Seonil’s birthday party outside of the heritage language school with the video camera, they asked me to videotape them while they played.

Although the children generally accepted the equipment in the classroom, there were also moments when I needed to be aware of their comfort zone with the equipment. Although many of the children were interested in the equipment, they also expressed their discomfort toward its presence, as illustrated below.

Field notes/Audio transcripts: 02/17/2008

The children are sitting in a circle on the floor ready to play a game. I sit next to Jessica and move a microphone near her. Jessica moves it farther away from her, saying, “I don’t want it to be close to me.” I say to her, “OK,” and take it away from her. A few seconds later, she asks me, “What is that?” I say to her, “It’s a microphone.” She asks me again, “Why do you bring it every day?” I ask her, “Every day?” She nods her head yes. I respond to her, “Because I want to listen to what you say.” She smiles at me.
This is connected to “the unique ethical needs of a given ethnographic situation” (Eder & Corsaro, 1999, p. 530). The flexibility to move the equipment according to the children’s preferences and comfort levels was necessary for me to be able to conduct the study “ethically.” Whenever the children expressed their discomfort at having the equipment near them, I tried to respond to their needs.

In addition to the field notes, the transcripts of video-and audio recordings became very important data resources in this study. Although some children spoke Korean, recording bilingual children’s interactions in my field notes was challenging to me, a speaker of English as a second language, when the children spoke English. Therefore, once field notes jotted at the research site were elaborated at home, I developed the field notes even further by combining the transcripts of video and audio recordings. For this purpose, I first created a log for video recordings from each visit (Graue & Walsh, 1998). The logging included a recorded date, running time, names of children who attended on the day, and a brief summary of recorded incidents. All the video recordings in the heritage language classroom were reviewed by me and transcribed into English with particular attention paid to children’s interactions. The transcribed video data were recorded into two columns in Microsoft Word as electronic files; one column was for participants’ interactions and the other was for contextual information and my brief interpretation. In addition, I captured video images by using “Window Movie Maker.” I then added those images into the transcripts of video recordings, while protecting the children’s identities. As Lin (1995) used visual data from videotapes by tracing the video images and copying them onto paper, capturing video images was very helpful for me to understand the context in which the children were situated.
In contrast to the video recordings, the audio recording data were transcribed selectively, because the audio recordings considerably overlapped the video recording and were thus used as supplementary data. The transcribed data of video recordings and the selectively transcribed data of audio recordings were combined with the field notes. The final field notes were transferred to ATLAS.ti 5 program, a software program for qualitative data analysis.

Informal Interviews with Participant Children

Children are the best source of information about their worlds, and interviews with children are one of the most useful methods for gathering data. Yet, interviewing young children is challenging. Graue and Walsh (1998) argued that interviews with children require attentiveness, patience, and persistence. Young children are often awkward in sit-down formal interviews which differ dramatically from ordinary conversations. Because of this, Graue and Walsh suggested the informal interview as an effective way of acquiring information from children. The informal interview, sometimes called an ethnographic interview, offers flexibility and enables the researcher to acquire more information (Patton, 2002). Therefore, I decided to do informal interviews because this method, which would resemble ordinary conversation to the children, would help them answer questions more comfortably and naturally.

I frequently and informally asked the children about their verbal and non-verbal interactions during the research period. When I interviewed the children, I considered the children’s proficiency in English or Korean when choosing the language for our conversations. For example, if the children were more fluent in English, I mainly asked questions in English. If
the children were more fluent in Korean, I spoke to them in Korean. However, the children often answered in a mixture of two languages, as described in the following vignette:

Field notes: 11/18/2008

Jessica is still doing her worksheet at the table. Except for her, the other children are having free play time in the classroom. Seonil rides on a toy truck and moves back and forth, saying, “Where do I go? Pa! Pa!” I ask, “Seonil, what are you doing?” in Korean. He answers, “I’m digging, digging” in a mixture of two languages. Seonil pretends to dig something, moving his arm up and down.

The data from the informal interviews with the children were transcribed in Korean or English based on the language the children used.

Informal and Formal Interviews with Participant Adults

Through interviewing participant adults, including teachers, school administrators, and caregivers, I gained information about the heritage language school and the Korean ethnic community. The formal interviews with adults were semi-structured and open-ended (Patton, 2002). The interviews were conducted with a list of questions and prompts (see Appendix F, G, & H). Specifically, I interviewed nine caregivers, the two heritage language teachers, the religious education teacher, and the two heritage language school administrators (the school coordinator and director) individually for 60-80 minutes in Spring 2008. I also had follow-up

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8 I received the information about children’s language proficiency from the lead teacher at the beginning of the study. In addition to this information, my observation of the children’s language use and proficiency during the first several weeks helped me decide what language I would use. If it was not clear what language I should use with a child, I used both languages.

9 My original plan was to conduct two to three interviews with teachers and school staff members, but I only interviewed them once (See Appendix C & D). The first interview provided me with enough information that I did not need additional interviews. Informal interviews throughout the research period also helped to enrich data.
interviews with six caregivers for 15-30 minutes in Fall 2008. The time and place for the interview with each adult were decided by the participant’s preference. Most interviews were conducted in an empty classroom at the heritage language school before or after class. Interviews with some caregivers were conducted at a coffee shop or a quiet restaurant near the caregivers’ homes. All of these formal interviews were conducted individually in Korean, audiotaped, and transcribed first in Korean and later selectively translated into English. Translation into another language can result in the loss of semantic or cultural meaning embedded in the utterances of interviewees (Simon, 1996). To retain the original meanings communicated by interviewees and minimize issues related to the translation processes, I recorded and analyzed interview data in Korean first, and then selectively translated data into English. All interview data were also recorded into electronic files with the Microsoft Word (see Appendix I for transcription conventions).

In addition, informal interviews with adults were conducted throughout the entire research period. Most of the children’s caregivers had social time with other parents and teachers during the breaks between the Korean language class, religious education class, and English mass for the children. Before and after the classes, they usually hung around the classroom. During these moments, I often asked the caregivers and teachers about the children. Because it was hard to jot down exactly what they told me at the moment, all informal interviews with adults were documented in my field notes from memory.

Collection of Artifacts and Photos

Through artifacts, ethnographers can acquire evidence and information related to research questions (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). I collected anything that could help me understand the participants, the classroom context, and the language school, including weekly newsletters for
parents, church newsletters, and information related to Korean immigrants. Graue and Walsh (1998) noted that children’s artifacts illuminate invisible parts of their lives. In this study, artifacts such as drawings, worksheets, and memos created by the children and displayed around the heritage language school were collected through hard copies and photos. With the permission of the school director, I also took photos of the physical environment and school facility.

The following Table 3.3 shows the summary of data collected for this study.
Table 3.3

*Summary of Corpus of Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary Data</th>
<th>Secondary Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Observation Field Notes</strong></td>
<td>• 23 school days in the pre-K heritage language classroom</td>
<td>• 23 school days in the pre-K religious education classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 23 school days in the pre-K religious education classroom</td>
<td>• 2 children’s birthday parties at commercial venues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2 children’s birthday parties at commercial venues</td>
<td>• 1 Christmas party at a child’s home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td>• 9 caregivers for 60-80 minutes each</td>
<td>• 1 teacher in the pre-K religious classroom for 60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 3 teachers, 2 administrators (the school director and the school coordinator) for 60-80 minutes each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow-up Interviews</strong></td>
<td>• 6 caregivers for 15-30 minutes each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Video Recordings</strong></td>
<td>• 19 school days (1 hour x 19 = 19 hours) in the pre-K heritage language classroom</td>
<td>• 19 school days (1.5 hours x 19 = 28.5 hours) in the pre-K religious education classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 19 school days (1.5 hours x 2 = 3 hours) at commercial venues</td>
<td>• 2 birthday parties at commercial venues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1 Christmas party (1 hour) at a child’s home</td>
<td>• 1 Christmas party at a child’s home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audio recordings</strong></td>
<td>• 19 school days (1 hour x 19 = 19 hours) in the pre-K heritage language classroom</td>
<td>• 19 school days (1.5 hours x 19 = 28.5 hours) in the pre-K religious education classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artifacts and Photos</strong></td>
<td>• Copies of children work in the pre-K heritage language classroom</td>
<td>• Church newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom newsletters</td>
<td>• Bulletin boards in the school and church</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

Inductive Analysis

Inductive analysis often serves as a starting point for qualitative researchers, as it allows the researcher to familiarize himself or herself with the data by categorizing it and comparing patterns (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Inductive analysis provides “analytical tools for handling masses of raw data” (Patton, 2002, p. 489). In particular, for this study, I adopted inductive analysis rooted in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000; Emerson et al., 1995; Pidgeon & Henwood, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). According to Charmaz (2000), this method provides systematic guidelines for analysis through coding data “to generate theory, not to verify it,” (p. 513), constant comparison, and memo writing. By avoiding forcing data into previous frameworks, grounded theory emphasizes the meanings that emerge from data.

Coding the Data

As DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) noted, “there is no substitute for reading and rereading fieldnotes and transcripts, each time with a particular question in mind” (p. 163). I carefully and reflectively read my field notes and all transcripts and then identified and formulated coding to find patterns, themes, and categories. Data coding is defined as the essential analytical process “through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form a theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 3). To facilitate coding from multiple data sources, I used the ATLAS.ti 5 program, which was designed to help researchers sort, categorize, and organize data. This program helped me handle the challenges from the massive amount of data in qualitative analysis. After the recorded and transcribed data from the Microsoft Word program files were imported into the ATLAS.ti 5 program, I coded the data line by line.
**Constant Comparison**

After identifying the open coding, I compared and contrasted the open coding of multiple sources of data as a means of searching for relationships across open coding. By sorting, comparing, and synthesizing the coded data, I categorized open coding into focused coding. Charmaz (2002) explained that the constant comparison of data helps researchers “check the fit between emerging theoretical frameworks and their respective empirical realities” (p. 686).

I consistently compared and contrasted (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) the coded data within and across the data sets to seek relationships and categorize the codes. I compared each individual participant with other participants. I also compared field notes with video- and audio-recording transcripts, interview transcripts, and artifacts. In Chapter 5, for example, I explain how I coded who was called what within and across all data. I consistently compared a child’s name as uttered by his or her peers with other children’s names as uttered by their peers. I also compared a child’s name as uttered by other children in field notes with his or her name as used by his or her caregiver in interview transcripts. Constant comparison also contributed to data triangulation (Patton, 2001), a practice which enriched my interpretation of the data. Thus, through constant comparison within and across multiple data, I developed categories and themes. This process helped me make sense of what was happening in the research site and refine meanings from participants’ points of view. I used the ATLAS.ti 5 to make the coded data visible for the constant comparison. One of useful aspects of the program was its network editor, which helped me visibly manage codes by merging or categorizing them. This allowed me to build conceptual categories.
Memo Writing

As Wolcott (1994) stated, it is difficult to distinguish “where description ends and analysis begins, or where analysis becomes interpretation” (p. 11) because qualitative research seeks to elicit meaning from data. Because of this, memo writing helps researchers elaborate their new concepts and find new relationships across data (Charmaz, 2002). I kept memos to preserve and develop my ideas and thoughts throughout data collection and data analysis. The ATLAS.ti 5 helped me write as many memos as I needed, save them, and keep track of the memos linked to each code.

Writing

For me, being an ethnographer means that I describe my participants’ lives and build bridges between their lives and early childhood education and teacher education to help the reader see clearly what my participants’ lives are like and how they see their lives. This portrait is not a simple description; instead, it relates the vicarious experiences of “deeper immersion in others’ worlds” (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 2). I aimed to make the invisible visible in this study. As Denzin (1997) noted, “Good ethnography always uses language poetically, and good poetry always brings a situation alive in the mind of reader” (p. 226). As such, in the following chapters I try to describe the occurrences at the research site so that they seem alive.
CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted at a Korean heritage language school in the southeastern United States. In this chapter, I describe the Korean heritage language school and its surrounding community, and I introduce the participants. I also present the caregivers’ perspectives on the maintenance of the heritage language to help contextualize the study.

The Setting of the Study

The State

The Korean heritage language school affiliated with St. Clare Church is located in the Peace community in a metropolitan area of the southeastern United States. Over the past decade, this state has also experienced one of the fastest growing rates of Korean immigration in the nation (Yu, Choe, and Han, 2002). The Korean population grew from 15,275 in 1990 to 28,745 in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2003). Additionally, a recent survey of languages spoken at home in this state revealed that Korean ranked as the fifth most spoken language behind Spanish, French, German, and Vietnamese (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

According to Overseas Korean Foundation (2007), the large number of Korean immigrants in this state led to the establishment of approximately 47 Korean language schools. In addition, since 2007 some public middle and high schools in the state’s metropolitan area have also offered the Korean language as part of the school’s curriculum. Some schools in a nearby county, in collaboration with the Korean Ministry of Education and the Korean language school program, offer one second language credit for students who meet requirements (e.g., attendance,
test, and assignments) in approved Saturday Korean language schools (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the USA, 2006).

Peace Community

The Peace Community is located in a metropolitan area of the state and has a population of approximately 588,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to the Chamber of Commerce in this community, the Korean population could account for up to 10% of the population. The Peace Community has kept its commercial reputation as a Korean immigrant and Korean-American business town in the state and has become a popular commercial marketplace for Koreans and other minorities. This community itself has many Korean-American businesses, including supermarkets, dry cleaners, realtors, dental offices, law firms, beauty parlors, and restaurants.

St. Clare Church: “This is Not a Church but a Country Club!”

St. Clare Church, a Korean Catholic church, was established in 1976. At that time, the number of Korean immigrants in the state was estimated at between 450 to 500, and most of these people were nurses or students studying in advanced programs. Of these, 35 were registered members of St. Clare Church. Since its founding, the church has served an integral role in the history of Korean immigration to the state. The number of parishioners has grown from the 35 registered members in 1976 to about 3,200 in 2008.

Some researchers (e.g., Hurh & Kim, 1990; Min, 1992) have suggested that ethnic churches in the United States have functioned to “maintain social interactions and cultural traditions” (Min, 1992, p. 1370). As Fr. Shin, the school director, explains, St. Clare Church is not an exception:
Before Jesuits from a Korean Province served this church, there was a period of seven years when a permanent deacon\textsuperscript{10} of an American parish served . . . . Because the permanent deacon couldn’t conduct mass, he worked as a kind of administrator for the church’s finances, human resources, etc. Because we didn’t have a priest, American priests from the nearby church took turns conducting mass. After that, Jesuits of the Korean Province were contacted, and they sent one or two Jesuit priests to the church. When the Jesuit priest first arrived here, the American permanent deacon said, “This is not a church but a country club!” . . . From the American permanent deacon’s perspective, our church was not a church, but instead a community of friends with a similar faith . . . due to the many social meetings at the church, he interpreted it as a country club. However, eventually he came to understand . . . The parishioners in this church are Korean immigrants who moved from Korea to the United States. . . . Many Korean immigrant businesspeople tend to target Korean immigrants or Koreans. When they come here, they naturally discuss their business with each other, have social relations with each other, and eat Korean food at church . . . This is common in other immigrant churches . . . The church plays an important role of ethnic socialization for Korean immigrants.

As Fr. Shin stated, the church supports various social groups such as sports clubs and art clubs in addition to groups focused on faith (e.g., Bible study groups, prayer groups). The parishioners also have many opportunities to build and expand their relationships with each other at church.

\textsuperscript{10} Deacons are “ordained ministers within the Roman Catholic Church who perform various ministries in support of the Church, usually at a parish-level” (Roman Catholic Diocese of Helena, n. d., § 1)
For example, once church mass finishes, many parishioners do not leave immediately. Instead, many stay on to enjoy food\textsuperscript{11} prepared by the parishioners and catch up with friends. After mass, the church transforms into a social network that allows parishioners to exchange information and maintain their ethnic community.

The parishioners of St. Clare Church are made up of first generation (those who were not born in the U.S., but were the first members of their family to immigrate), 1.5 generation (those who immigrated to the U.S. before reaching adulthood), and second generation (those who were born and grew up in the U.S.) Korean immigrants. Due to the nature of its parishioners, the church provides English mass for Korean-American children and youths who do not communicate well in Korean:

\textit{Interview transcripts: 12/09/2007}

\textit{Although there are exceptions, the children do not understand Korean well. Most of them were born in the United States. . . . In general, they are not fluent Korean speakers. Some children can understand Korean, but many struggle to express their thoughts in Korean. Because these children feel more comfortable in English, an English mass was requested by the parishioners.} (The school director, Fr. Shin)

During my research period, the church asked an American priest from a nearby parish church to provide an English mass for the youth. Another mass for young children was conducted by Fr. Shin, the Korean priest, in English.

\textsuperscript{11} Women’s groups in the church would often sell various foods, such as apples, Korean rice cakes, and Korean dumplings.
Korean Heritage Language School

St. Clare Church provides two major community programs for children and youth: Korean heritage language education and religious education. Like other Korean heritage schools in the United States, the church provides Korean immigrant children with Korean cultural awareness through heritage language education. The classrooms for the programs belong to the church, are located in part of the church building, and are also used for other parish activities such as Bible study.

The church opened its Korean heritage language school in December 2004, although it was not the first Korean heritage language school in the Peace Community. Mrs. Hong, the school coordinator, explained the major reason for opening this school in the following transcript:

Interview transcripts: 01/27/2008

*The other heritage schools were already full because of the increasing number of students. So, many parishioners requested a Korean heritage language class be scheduled after church on Sunday. . . . The number of children [at church] is [also] increasing now.*

The school administrators and teachers were all Korean immigrants and/or Korean-Americans who worked as unpaid volunteers under the direction of Fr. Shin, the Korean assistant priest. As an assistant priest, Fr. Shin served as the heritage language school director and directed religious education for children and youth. He also made decisions related to the school budget and public relations.

Mrs. Hong, the school coordinator, is a Korean mother in her 40’s who immigrated to the United States with her family in 2003. Because she has a master’s degree and took some doctoral
courses in the field of education in Korea, she took on this responsibility and was in charge of recruiting teachers, counseling parents about registration, organizing the curriculum, running staff meetings and conferences with parents, and announcing important events to the parents and church members.

During the period of my study, the school operated for 1 hour every week (10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.)\textsuperscript{12} and was supported primarily by student tuition ($25 per year) and a small amount of church funds.\textsuperscript{13} All teachers held at least a bachelor’s degree. Most teachers in the upper grade levels were mothers who were interested in their child’s Korean heritage language education. Teachers for the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms were bilingual college students. During the research period, 110 students attended the school and were divided into 12 classes, from pre-kindergarten through high school. These 12 classes were served by 12 lead teachers and 5 assistant teachers. Most classrooms used textbooks published by Korean institutes and distributed by the Korean Consulate General. Pre-kindergartners, however, used materials prepared and designed by their teachers. For children in the 1\textsuperscript{st} through 5\textsuperscript{th} grades, the school used textbooks published by the Korean Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation. For children in grades 6 through 12, textbooks published by a Korean university institute were used.

Immediately after the Korean language class, most children, including my participants, attended religious education classes (12:20 p.m.-1:20 p.m.) taught by volunteer teachers (see Table 4.1). At the time of data collection, about 330 students from pre-kindergarten through 12\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{12} The Korean heritage language program moved to 9:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m. in the Spring of 2008. Along with this, the religion education program also moved to 11:00 a.m.-12:10 p.m. during the Spring of 2008.

\textsuperscript{13} After September 2008, the school became somewhat independent from the church. During this time, funds from student tuition and the Korean Consulate General were used to offer a small stipend to teachers.
grade attended religious classes staffed by 27 teachers. Each classroom had two teachers, and most teachers were bilingual college students. In contrast to the Korean language classes, English was used as the dominant language for communication in the religious education classes.

The following table describes the church’s Korean heritage language and religious education programs for pre-kindergarten children.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Heritage Language Class</th>
<th>Religious Education Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of registered students</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of students</td>
<td>3-4 year olds</td>
<td>3-4 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>1 lead teacher</td>
<td>1 lead teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 assistant teachers</td>
<td>1 assistant teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant language</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class schedule on Sunday</td>
<td>Class: 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. (including snack time)</td>
<td>Class: 11:45 a.m.-1:20 (Including snack time) Lunch: 12:20 p.m.-1:20 p.m. (provided by PTA) English Mass: From 1:30 p.m. (for children(^{14}))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the religious education classes, all but the pre-kindergarteners attended English mass. Mrs. Lee, one of the pre-kindergarten teachers in the religious education program, explained, “Two out of three children feel more comfortable speaking English . . . [English

\(^{14}\) Young Korean-American children and Korean-American youth initially had English mass together from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. Since the middle of October 2007, they have separated the younger children’s mass (at 12:00 p.m.) from the youth mass (at 1:30 p.m.). English mass for the young children has been moved to immediately after their religious education class.
communication is not a policy, but it helps the children understand better” (Interview, 03/22/2008). Thus, most children and youth who attended the programs provided by the church felt more comfortable speaking English than Korean.

The Pre-Kindergarten Classroom in the Korean Heritage Language School

Teachers

The pre-kindergarten classroom was run by two female teachers. The lead teacher, Miss Cho, was a freshman college student. She is a native Korean who is also fluent in English. When she was very young, she often visited her relatives who lived in the United States. When she was in high school, she spent one year in the United State as an exchange student. After that, she decided to attend college in the United States. Although she was bilingual, she mainly communicated with the children in Korean. The assistant teacher, Miss Jang, was a 10th grade high school student. She immigrated to the United States with her family when she was a 4th grader. She graduated from the heritage language school and served as a volunteer assistant teacher. Miss Jang reported that she had been spending more time with Korean friends since she had begun attending the heritage language school. In the heritage language school, she wanted to learn writing in Korean rather than speaking in Korean because she thought her speaking was better than her writing. Although she spoke to the lead teacher in Korean, Miss Jang seemed more comfortable communicating with the children in English.

Classroom characteristics and the pre-kindergarten curriculum

Although the Korean heritage language school’s resources were limited when compared to formal school systems, the school tried to respond to young children’s needs in many ways. The pre-kindergarten classroom was painted with bright ivory and green colors, and the carpet was decorated with letters, numbers, and animals. The classroom also differed from formal
classrooms in that it was not divided by shelves or tables. Instead, it had a large area of open space. All shelves were located along the wall, and several tables were placed on one side of the classroom. This arrangement allowed the children either to play individually or to interact with each other in group activities.

When children worked on worksheets and coloring books or ate snacks, they sat at two or three small tables. A small book shelf and a shelf with some toys stood next to the tables. The classroom also had two tall book shelves with Korean storybooks, a play house as tall as many of the children, and a movable seesaw. A bathroom appropriate to the children’s physical size was inside the classroom. A big box full of toys (e.g., trucks, balls, etc.), a bulletin board, and a clothes rack were located on the opposite side wall. In the carpeted area, a DVD player and a TV hung on a wall.

The curriculum of the pre-kindergarten class was organized mainly around completing individual worksheets (e.g., coloring, writing Korean letters, and matching words) created by teachers. Singing songs, reading storybooks, and free play rounded out the hour. Throughout the academic year, the children focused on pronouncing and writing Korean consonants and vowels and learning vocabulary containing these consonants and vowels. The goals of the pre-kindergarten in the school were described as “not so much academic-focused” (Interview with the school coordinator, Mrs. Hong, 01/27/2008); instead, the teachers focused on introducing Korean culture through various activities. Mrs. Hong explained the use of language in the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms in the transcript presented below:

Interview transcripts: 01/27/2008

Because the children may feel uncomfortable speaking in either English or Korean, the
lead teacher is fluent in Korean so that she can answer children who can’t speak English well. . . . In the case of the assistant teacher, she uses more English. I have heard that children in other Korean heritage language schools rarely speak English and instead are asked to speak only in Korean. So I think the lead teacher, who speaks fluent Korean, and the assistant teacher, who speaks fluent English, fills the gaps between the different levels of language [proficiency and] use in a class. For example, when children ask questions in English, I think it is OK for the teachers to answer in English.

The school actively recruited pre-kindergarten teachers who were fluent speakers in both English and Korean, in consideration of children’s different levels of language use.

The children’s attendance at the school fluctuated over the study period because attending the heritage language school was not mandatory. The total number of formally registered children in the pre-kindergarten classroom was 19 (9 boys, 10 girls). After the first few weeks, some children dropped out of the class, leaving 15 regular attendees (10 boys, 5 girls). The class schedule was often lengthened or shortened according to church events. The fact that the school was affiliated with the church led the caregivers to perform unique roles in the classroom. For example, the caregivers took turns providing snacks for the children. Certain caregivers frequently helped the teachers during snack time and took the class to the religious education classroom after the Korean heritage language class in place of the teachers. Thus, the pre-kindergarten classroom had many flexible and unique characteristics that were different from the formal school systems.

**Participants**

In this section, I introduce children as participants with information about their caregivers and family backgrounds (see Chapter 3 for teachers and school staff members as participants).
All children were born and live in the United States, and their parents immigrated into the United States with a variety of different immigrant histories and range of immigrant status (see Appendix J for background information about caregivers as participants). First, the range of the U.S. residency of children’s parents varied from 5 years to 32 years. Second, the period when a family immigrated into the United States was also different for each family, and even between husband and wife within the same family. In particular, some mothers who were caregivers in this study came to the United States after they married their husbands, who were already immigrants. This resulted in the childrens’ fathers having longer periods of residency than their mothers (e.g., Hyonmin’s family, Joohee’s family, Myungwoo’s family). These mothers also had limited language proficiency in English due to their short periods of U.S. residency compared to other caregivers. Some fathers immigrated to the United States when they were young children (e.g., Jessica’s father, 2 years old), and youths (e.g., Hyonmin’s father, a 10th grader, and Junsung’s father, a 12th grader). Other fathers came to the United States when they were much older (e.g., Yongjae’s father, a graduate student) than others. However, regardless of these different immigrant histories, in this study I define all children as Korean-Americans because they were born and live in the United States as U.S. citizens.

Hyonmin (Simon) Cho

Hyonmin was a cheery, sweet, tall child with big round eyes. He got along with other children easily and followed the teachers’ directions and classroom rules well. He was four years old when he became a participant in my study. Hyonmin liked to talk to the teachers about what he did at home and in his public pre-kindergarten, which he attended on weekdays in the school year of 2007-2008. Hyonmin also began attending kindergarten in Fall 2008. He began attending the heritage language school in Fall 2007.
Before attending the public pre-kindergarten, Hyonmin had few chances to communicate with English speakers. Hyonmin’s mother communicated with him mainly in Korean, and he tended to use Korean more than English at home. This resulted in a limited proficiency in English. According to his mother, when Hyonmin talked to his younger sister (who was two years old), he used a mix of English and Korean. As she explained in the transcript below, Hyonmin’s mother felt that his play groups in and out of school were limited to Korean children:

*Interview transcripts: 03/02/2008*

He usually plays with Korean friends. In the [pre]school, I wanted him to play with American friends inside and outside of the school. However, it seems that his play with the American children is just limited to the inside of the school. I think this is probably due to his limited proficiency in English.

Although Hyonmin’s mother had lived in the United States for six years, she characterized herself as having limited English proficiency. Hyonmin’s father was a child of an immigrant family; he came to the U.S. when he was 16 years old. His extended family lived in the same state. Hyonmin’s father ran his own business in the Peace Community. Hyonmin’s mother stayed at home to take care of Hyonmin and his younger sister. Compared to the other caregivers in the study, Hyonmin’s parents were not active participants in church activities.

*Yongjae (Jacob) Choi*

Yongjae was a tall, calm, quiet child. He attended the heritage language school with his older sister, a first grader. He followed teachers’ directions very well, but rarely spoke up. According to his mother, Yongjae did not tend to talk much at the heritage language school or at home. When Yongjae began to participate in my study, he was four years old. He attended a private pre-kindergarten from 2007-2008 and moved to a public kindergarten in Fall 2008.
Yongjae started to attend the heritage language school in Fall 2007. Outside of both the formal and heritage school settings, Yongjae mainly played with Korean children. Yongjae’s parents had lived in the United States for 10 years. His father gained a doctoral degree from a U.S. university and found a job in an American research center. Yongjae’s mother stayed at home with her children. According to Yongjae’s mother, she tried to encourage Yongjae to speak Korean at home by mainly communicating with him in Korean. However, over time, he began to use English more often and felt more comfortable with English than Korean. At home, Yongjae talked to his older sister in English only and communicated with his father mainly in a mixed language of English and Korean. In the classroom, I rarely observed him speaking Korean.

Yongjae’s parents actively participated in the church’s activities. During my research, Yongjae’s father worked as a member of the church staff, and his mother served as a teacher in a class for 2nd and 3rd graders in the heritage language school.

Seonil (Steve) Jang

Seonil was a small and diligent child with chubby cheeks who carefully followed the teacher’s directions. Despite his age (he was three year olds, one of the youngest children in the class when I started this study), he always performed well in the classroom. As the only child in his family, he was fluent in both Korean and English. He started attending an English speaking daycare center when he was two and half years old. During the research period, he attended a daycare center from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008 and moved to a private pre-kindergarten class in Fall 2008. Seonil started to attend the heritage language school in Fall 2007.

Outside of the school, Seonil usually played with his mother at home, although he sometimes also played with other American children. He also joined an English story-time book club on weekends. Seonil’s mother told me, “Seonil does not play with children from the church
except on weekends. On weekdays, I try to play with him at home after school” (Interview, 02/19/2008).

Seonil’s parents spoke both languages to Seonil but mainly used Korean at home. Seonil’s parents had lived in the United States for about 10 years. They had no major problems communicating with others in English, but they still felt their English was limited. His father received his master’s degree from a U.S. university, moved to the Peace Community, and began working at a company run by Americans. Unlike other immigrant parents in this study, Seonil’s parents, in their 30s at the time of this study, began their lives in the United States as international graduate students. His mother stayed at home to take care of Seonil and was very interested in Seonil’s academic preparedness and achievement. An active parishioner, she participated in various activities including volunteer work and had a broad network at the St. Clare Church.

Soojung (Marianna) Kim

Soojung had a round face and loved cute and pretty things such as small, girlish stickers. She was somewhat obstinate and liked to be the center of attention. She attended the heritage language school with her older brother, a second grader. According to Soojung’s mother, Soojung started to attend an English-speaking private preschool when she was three years old. During my research period, Soojung was four years old and attended the same preschool as Jessica, her classmate at the heritage language school, from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008. Like many other children, she began attending the heritage language school in Fall 2007. Outside of the school, she played with Korean church friends.

Soojung had limited Korean proficiency. She was able to understand what others said in Korean, but had difficulty expressing her own thoughts. During the research period, I rarely
observed her speaking Korean with adults and peers. However, when I interviewed her mother, Soojung came in and interrupted a few times with some Korean phrases such as “let’s go home.” Soojung’s mother described her daughter’s language use at home in the transcript presented below:

**Interview transcripts: 02/10/2008**

*At home, I naturally speak to her in Korean. However, she responds to me in English.*

*Her older brother does not speak Korean. In fact, Soojung actually knows more Korean words than her brother does. But when she started to go to the preschool and I started to work, she began staying longer at the preschool longer, attending after school programs there . . . As a result, she has learned the American children’s ways of speaking and seems to have lost the Korean language. When I ask her to speak Korean, she answers that she doesn’t know it well and that I need to teach it to her . . . Soojung’s father does not speak English well. She automatically but awkwardly speaks to him in Korean . . . She has told me that she feels more comfortable speaking in English than in Korean.*

Soojung’s mother believed that Soojung needed to speak both languages (Korean and English) because she felt that Soojung’s losing the heritage language might mean losing her heritage and identity.

As a child, Soojung’s mother lived with her family in the United Stated until she moved to Korea during her fifth grade year. After her marriage, however, she came back to the United States with her husband. Soojung’s older brother, who moved to the United States when he was a baby, rarely spoke Korean. Soojung’s mother spoke English fluently while Soojung’s father had limited English skills. After Soojung’s parents got divorced in Spring 2007, her mother started to
work for a Korean company in the Peace Community. Soojung’s mother often participated in the church activities initiated by women’s groups, such as lunch preparation for parishioners.

Jessica (Joohee) Lee

Jessica was an active, delightful, and smart biracial child with long black hair and black eyes. Jessica, who was popular among her peers, liked to talk to others and was very inquisitive. She played more often with boys than girls and maintained a leadership role among her peers. When Jessica became a participant in this study, she was four years old. In the school year of 2007-2008, Jessica attended a private preschool and an after-school program during the weekdays. She began attending a public kindergarten in Fall 2008. Like other children, Jessica started to attend the heritage language school in Fall 2007.

Jessica’s father immigrated to the United States as an infant in the 1970s. He and his European-American wife got divorced when Jessica was three months old. Jessica’s grandmother now took care of her, and Jessica was the only grandchild in the family. After the divorce, Jessica’s family moved to the Peace Community. Jessica’s father rarely spoke in Korean, and Jessica communicated with her family members in English due to her limited command of Korean. One of the reasons that Jessica’s family started attending the St. Clare Church was that Jessica’s father wanted more exposure to Korean culture for both Jessica and himself.

When this study started, Jessica only spoke a few Korean words. However, Jessica surprised the teachers by the second semester with her rapidly increasing knowledge of Korean. As Jessica’s grandmother told me:

Interview transcripts: 02/26/2008

I was also surprised that she sometimes spoke Korean words. . . . When I asked to her, “How did you know them?” She answered, “I [just] know.” This was truly surprising
because her father speaks to her only in English, as he himself does not understand [Korean] very well.

Jessica’s grandmother also mentioned that Jessica had many Korean friends, ate Korean foods, and was actively engaged in Korean culture. The following field notes, recorded during the religious education class, describe how much Jessica was aware of herself as a Korean:

Field notes/Audio transcripts: 04/13/2008

Jessica and Kyuwon sit together and talk with each other. The assistant teacher in religious education is involved in their conversation in English.

Kyuwon: My dad can speak Korean (in an emphasized tone).

Assistant teacher: What?

Kyuwon: My dad speaks Korean.

Assistant teacher: I speak Korean too. You can speak Korean?

Kyuwon: Yeah, yeah (but not in confident voice)

Assistant teacher: That’s because you’re a Korean. (to Jessica) Are you a Korean?

Jessica: Yeah! (in emphasized tone)

Assistant teacher: (teasing voice) You look Chinese!

Jessica: No!

Kyuwon: I haven’t met a Chinese.

Jessica: Not me, either!

In addition, Jessica’s grandmother actively participated in the church activities (e.g., lunch preparation for parishioners, a prayer group) and frequently took Jessica to these events. Jessica’s father did not participate much in church activities.
Joohee (Michelle) Lee

Joohee, who shared a Korean name with Jessica, was a shy and docile girl; however, once she got to know someone, she became very friendly and outgoing with that person. When Joohee started to participate in this study, she was three years old. Joohee began attending an English-speaking daycare center when she was three years old. In Fall 2008, she also began attending a private pre-kindergarten. Like many other children, she attended the heritage language school in Fall 2007, but did not attend the religious education class. According to her mother, Joohee was popular and had lots of friends in her day care center. She, however, had few chances to play with her peers outside of school. Instead, Joohee often played with her Korean church friends after school.

Joohee’s father immigrated with his family when he was an infant. He grew up in an environment where “he rarely interacted with Korean cultures and Korean people.” Consequently, he felt he was “a Korean just by his physical appearance” (Interview with Joohee’s mother, 03/22/08). Joohee’s mother has lived in the United States since her marriage to Joohee’s father in 1999. She was the only Korean daughter-in-law in Joohee’s paternal family. Joohee’s uncles all married European-American women. Due to his limited proficiency in Korean, Joohee’s father mainly spoke to Joohee in English. Joohee’s mother explained the reason for this in the transcript below:

Interview transcripts: 03/22/2008

Despite his improvement since our marriage, he still speaks Korean awkwardly. He kept talking to her [Joohee] with his awkward Korean. So I suggested to him that he speak to her in English because I was really concerned that she would learn that awkward Korean from him.
While Joohee’s mother played the role of maintaining Joohee’s Korean culture, Joohee’s other family members (e.g., her European-American relatives, her father, her aunt) provided her with opportunities to learn American culture and language. Joohee’s mother had limited proficiency in English and sometimes had difficulty understanding even some of her family members:

Interview transcripts: 03/22/2008

When my husband uses American expressions, I don’t understand. Even if one speaks English fluently, there are limitations to understanding slang and informal expressions. I don’t worry about her cultural adjustment [to the host society]. Instead, I often don’t understand others, and I’m the one who is not adjusting very well.

Joohee’s mother and father were less engaged in the church than many of the other parents. Joohee’s mother only participated in mass at the church.

Boyong (Emily) Min & Wonkyu (Mike) Min

Boyong, a shy tall girl and Wonkyu, a shy small boy, were siblings. When they began participating in this study, Boyong was four years old and Wonkyu was two and a half years old. Wonkyu was too young to register for the pre-kindergarten class (he was the youngest child in the classroom), but the school allowed him to be with his older sister in the classroom because he did not want to be separated from her. Indeed, I observed that he cried and insisted upon accompanying Boyong when she was in the heritage language classroom or moved to the religious education class. Reluctantly, his mother let him sit next to her in the religious education classroom. Boyong and Wonkyu always stayed close to each other and rarely interacted with other children throughout this study. I seldom observed them talking to each other or to peers or teachers in Korean. Until I overheard them talking with their mother after class, I believed that
they could not speak Korean at all. When teachers or other children asked them something in English or Korean, the two siblings generally replied using only a few words (e.g. yes or no) or shook their heads. It seemed that the siblings’ shyness and frequent absence from the classroom prevented them from building solid peer relations.

Although these children’s mother agreed to do an interview, I was unfortunately unable to interview her. One of main reasons for this was that I could not meet with her regularly because her children were often absent. In addition, unlike other caregivers, she left with her children immediately after class, thus making it hard to interview her. For these reasons, I could not gain much information (e.g., their family, peer relations outside of the school, etc.) on these children. However, I was able to glean some information from the other caregivers and from the siblings’ registration form. I learned that the Min siblings’ father ran his own business. Although many of the other caregivers did not interact with Ms. Min, Seonil’s mother was able to relay some information about the Min family. Ms. Min and Seonil’s mother both attended the same regular group meeting of parishioners. However, in comparison with the other children in this study, I received relatively little information concerning Boyong and Wonkyu. Neither parent participated actively in church activities.

Kyuwon (Eric) Oh

Kyuwon was a small, thin, and meticulous boy. He was somewhat shy and cautious about talking to unfamiliar people. In the first weeks of the school year, Kyuwon was reluctant to enter the classroom; his father had to physically push him through the door. Kyuwon usually did his best work when he was directly instructed by teachers. He rarely spoke Korean with his peers or adults at the school; however, his grandmother told me that he sometimes talked to her in Korean. Overall, Kyuwon seemed more comfortable communicating with others in English.
When his grandmother began attending the church, Kyuwon also began attending the heritage school with his older brother Kyuseon, a first grader. In the beginning of this study, Kyuwon was the oldest child in the classroom (four years and eleven months). In the school year of 2007-2008, he attended a public pre-kindergarten during the week. In the Fall semester of 2008, he moved to a kindergarten class in the same school.

Outside of the public school, Kyuwon mainly played with Korean or Korean-American children. Kyuwon’s grandmother described Kyuwon’s play group and the challenges she faced communicating with them in the following transcript:

**Interview transcripts: 02/12/2008**

*Mostly his friends are Koreans. But even when Korean children come to my house, they speak to each other in English. I can’t communicate with them, but I know who their mothers are. I can talk to their mothers at least about what their children did at my home.*

*But I can’t do that when American children come to my house.*

Kyuwon has been raised by a single father who moved to the United States when he was in his 20s. His father had lived in the States for over 17 year. Kyuwon’s father had no difficulty communicating with others in English. When Kyuwon’s parents got divorced four years ago, Kyuwon’s grandmother, who appeared to be in her early 60s, came to the United States in order to support the family by serving as a caregiver. His father’s divorce led the family to move to the Peace Community. Since Kyuwon’s grandmother has limited English proficiency, she told me that she often had difficulty helping her grandchildren with their homework or communicating with the public school they attended during the week.

When I had a second interview with Kyuwon’s grandmother in Fall 2008, she mentioned that Kyuwon’s father is often gone for three to four days at a time because of his work and that
she has also started to work in the Korean community. Kyuwon’s grandmother told me that she and another Korean working mother who lived nearby took turns watching both Kyuwon, his older brother, and the neighbor’s children. Her neighbor’s children attended the same public school as Kyuwon. For example, on the days when Kyuwon’s grandmother came home early from work, she picked up her neighbor’s children as well as her grandchildren from their school. On the days when her neighbor finished work early, she helped with the children’s homework and handled letters from the school. Thus, they helped each other to meet their children’s needs.

*Junsung (Paul) Park*

Junsung, an only child, was quiet and well-behaved. He shared his toys with others and was polite and considerate. He had limited proficiency in Korean and was more familiar with English. He had attended an English speaking daycare center since he was two and a half years old. He learned English before he could speak Korean fluently because “he was in a day care center all day” (Interview with Junsung’s mother, 03/30/2008). He mostly understood what others said in Korean, but he had difficulty speaking in Korean as explained by his mother in the following transcript:

*Interview transcripts: 03/31/2008*

*One day, he told me, “Mommy, I’m Korean. I don’t know how to speak Korean. That makes me angry, mommy. My grandma and grandpa are in Korea, right?” He said, “I’m a Korean. Right, mom?” . . . The private school teacher [at preschool] reminded him of it- “You speak in Korean because you’re a Korean.” He understands it, but he feels uncomfortable expressing himself in Korean. He understands what we say [in Korean], but he answers in English. It doesn’t mean that he doesn’t know [what we say in Korean].*
For this reason, Junsung’s mother often encouraged him to speak only in Korean at the heritage language school: “You need to speak only in Korean” (Field notes, 02/24/2008). Junsung attended a private pre-kindergarten from Fall 2007 to Spring 2008 and moved to a private kindergarten in Fall 2008. He began attending the heritage language school in Fall 2007. Outside of school, Junsung mainly played with his Korean church friends.

Junsung’s parents were in their 40s and had lived in the United States for over 20 years. They mostly communicated in English at home. Junsung’s father immigrated to the United States with his family when he was a high school student. He ran his own business in the Peace Community. Junsung’s mother came to the Unites States in her 20s and has been running her own business in the community as well. In Fall 2008, she stopped working for a while because she wanted to concentrate on Junsung’s academic preparation for kindergarten. Junsung’s father actively served as a member of the church staff.

Junsung’s parents did not feel that they were actively involved in the host society; they participated in few activities at Junsung’s school. Although Junsung’s mother felt she could easily communicate in English, she did not feel comfortable actively participating in school and community activities. Junsung’s father was even more hesitant to interact with people from the mainstream culture. As Junsung’s mother described, “In fact, it [mingling with Americans] is uncomfortable, but I should mingle with them for my child . . . However, my husband does not like to” (Interview, 03/31/08).

Myungwoo (Peter) Shon

Myungwoo was small and always conveyed his curiosity and playfulness in his eyes. He moved energetically around the classroom and liked to hug his friends and participate in activities. As one of the youngest children in the classroom, Myungwoo at times missed his
mother when she dropped him off. Nonetheless, Myungwoo greatly enjoyed attending the heritage language school. When Myungwoo became my participant in Fall 2007, he was three and half years old. He used a mix of English and Korean at the heritage language school and at home. He attended an English-speaking daycare center on weekdays during the school year of 2007-2008. In Fall 2008, he moved to a private pre-kindergarten class. Outside of the school, Myungwoo played with Korean friends he had met in his neighborhood or at church.

Myungwoo’s father had immigrated to the United States when he was a second grader. At the time of the study, he had been a U.S. resident for 20 years. He owned his own business in the Peace Community. Myungwoo’s mother, who was in her 30s, married and moved to the United States 6 years before this study. Before Myungwoo’s family moved to this southeastern state from another state, Myungwoo attended a Korean daycare center because his mother worked at a Korean company. Myungwoo’s parents actively participated in church programs: Myungwoo’s father served as a staff member in religious education, and Myungwoo’s mother taught 6th and 7th graders in the heritage language school.

The following table summarizes the information of the participants in this study.
Table 4.2

Participant Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Korean Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Birthday</th>
<th>School for weekdays (Fall 2007-Spring 2008)</th>
<th>School for weekdays (Fall 2008-Spring 2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyonmin Cho</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>09/09/2003</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongjae Choi</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>07/15/2003</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seonil Jang</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>05/19/2004</td>
<td>Daycare center</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soojung Kim</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>07/22/2003</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joohee (Jessica) Lee</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>02/16/2003</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joohee (Michelle) Lee</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>04/08/2004</td>
<td>Daycare center</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyong Min</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>06/24/2003</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonkyu Min</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>10/16/2004</td>
<td>Daycare Center</td>
<td>Daycare Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyuwon Oh</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>12/27/2002</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junsung Park</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>05/28/2003</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myungwoo Shon</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>05/07/2004</td>
<td>Daycare center</td>
<td>Pre-K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Living the Hyphens:

Caregivers’ Perspectives on Heritage Language and Their Children

As salmon are born in a river, migrate to the sea, and then return to the river, my children were born here and will try their best to enter the mainstream society. However, they may eventually come back to the Korean community. (Interview with Hyonmin’s mother, 03/02/2008)

The participant children often mentioned to their peers and teachers that they attended two different schools: the heritage language school on Sunday and the regular school on
weekdays. However, the children did not seem to know exactly why they needed to attend the heritage language school. One day while the students were working on their coloring worksheets, I asked them why they had to come to this heritage language class. They just looked at me and the teachers in silence. Miss Jang, the assistant teacher, answered for them, saying, “I think you guys come to learn Korean, right?” One of them hesitantly replied, “Yes” (Field notes, 11/18/2007).

As discussed in Chapter 2, many other ethnic groups operate their heritage language programs either on weekends or through after-school programs (Draper & Hicks, 2000; Chao, 1997). For immigrant children, attending the heritage language school entails extra effort beyond regular school work. Sometimes, this may be perceived as a burden by both the children and their families. Despite this challenge, why do Korean immigrant caregivers want their children to attend the heritage language school?

The school’s affiliation with St. Clare Church served as one incentive for enrolling the children in the heritage language classes. Most caregivers agreed that the easily accessible child care allowed them to participate more freely in mass. For example, Myungwoo’s mother acknowledged that she took advantage of the heritage language class because it was offered at the same time as Sunday mass for adults: “I’m able to attend the mass because Myungwoo is being taken care of in the class” (Interview, 02/17/2008). Additionally, some caregivers strongly desired that their children learn the Korean language. For example, Jessica’s grandmother alluded to the importance of maintaining Korean heritage through language study: “because we cannot escape our Korean identity, it’s important not to forget the Korean language (Interview, 02/10/2008).
The caregivers’ interest in having their children learn the heritage language, however, was also deeply related to their concern about social barriers and constraints facing their children in the futures. From interviews with the caregivers, I found that most of these immigrant families felt uncertainty and fear for their young children’s futures as minorities in the host society. These caregivers were ambivalent about their children's acculturation into the host culture. The fears and uncertainties they expressed also resulted from an acculturative stress (Oh, Koeske, & Sales, 2002) generated through their own immigrant status. I found that the acculturative stress that the caregivers experienced was differently linked to their desire to maintain heritage language depending on their immigrant histories (e.g., duration of residency in U.S.). Relative newcomers (e.g., Yongjae’s mother, Seonil’s mother) seemed to have use heritage language to balance their children’s lives between the Korean ethnic community and the host society. The caregivers who had lived in the U.S. for a long time (e.g., Junsung’s mother, Jessica’s grandmother) seemed to have learned that the balance expected from newcomers is very difficult to maintain, and wanted to help their children avoid that difficult path; this reflected their own experiences. Regardless of these subtly different views on heritage language, the immigrant caregivers generally saw heritage language as a safety device for protecting their children from challenges they might experience as a result of unsuccessful adjustment to the host society. Additionally, these families thought that maintaining the heritage language would help their children access social and emotional support systems available in the heritage community. I discuss these immigrant caregivers’ perspectives in detail in the rest of this chapter.

Fear of Detachment from the Family and Ethnic Community

English acquisition is considered the primary pathway for successful acculturation into the host culture. Researchers have found that limited English proficiency negatively influences
children’s opportunities to enter the host society (Zhou, 1997). As Luo and Wiseman (2000) claimed, for example, the dual expectations of language proficiency and language use may challenge both immigrant parents and their children:

Children may experience conflict in the process of achieving bilingualism. Without the comparable strong ethnolinguistic attachment as their parents have, the children may be more concerned about the issue of integrating into the mainstream of America than maintaining their ethnic language. Consequently, the parents in the immigrant family may prefer the ethnic language; however, their children may prefer the dominant society's language. (p. 308)

Similarly, the Korean immigrant caregivers in this study wanted their children to be fluent in both Korean and English. At the same time, the caregivers feared that the loss of the heritage language might result in their children’s detachment from the family and the Korean community. Junsung’s mother expressed her fear of estrangement from her son in terms of language in the following transcript:

_Interview transcripts: 03/31/2008_

*If he could not speak in Korean, we [his mother and father] would feel very lonely. If he could not speak in Korean, he might also feel loneliness. It would move him further away from his cousins in Korea. So he should speak Korean.*

Researchers have noted that immigrant families often experience parent-child conflicts because of the acculturation gap between parents and their children; these gaps become more pronounced as the child moves into adolescence (Buki, Ma, Strom, & Strom, 2003; Foner, 1997; Qin, 2006; Zhou, 1997). In particular, the lack of communication resulting from the loss of children’s heritage language influences parent-child relations in many immigrant families (Luo
& Wiseman, 2000; Qin, 2006). Korean immigrant families in this study experienced the same issue. For example, Junsung’s parents had lived in the States for over 20 years (see Table 4.3) and communicated with their son more in English than in Korean at home. Junsung began attending an English-speaking daycare center when he was two and a half years old. His mother shared that Junsung learned English before he was able to understand and speak Korean because “he was in the daycare center all day” (Interview, 03/30/2008). Although Junsung understood what others said in Korean, he had difficulty speaking the language. Junsung’s mother believed that the Korean language served as an important tool, allowing Junsung to connect to his parents, his family in Korea, and the Korean community. She felt that his limited Korean proficiency restricted their communication, and served and would keep serving as a barrier to their relationship. This is in line with Cho’s (2000) study on Korean-American and Korean immigrant adolescents. Cho reported that Korean heritage language plays an important role in positive parent-child relationships.

Similarly, Myungwoo’s mother shared her concerns about losing heritage language when her son used English more than Korean, because it could potentially prevent her son from communicating with her.

Interview transcript: 02/17/2008

At home, he [Myungwoo] used only Korean before going to school. In the first few weeks of school, he did not adjust well. The teacher asked me to use English at home. However, I was concerned that he would lose his Korean. I heard from other Korean [immigrant parents] that he could not learn Korean if he didn’t use Korean at home. So, I kept speaking Korean with him [although I worried about his adjustment at school]. Instead, I used some phrases that teachers often used at school in English, like ‘Sit down’, ‘Stand
up’, or ‘Wash your hands.’ Except for these words, I did not use English at home.

However, starting this year, he suddenly started using only English at home all day. His English had a lot of grammatical errors, though. At the time, I thought he would totally lose his Korean if I did not use Korean at home. . . . So I tried to use Korean at home. . . .

Maybe due to his improving English, he will be able to adjust more easily in his next year at school. . . . However, these days, his Korean pronunciations sound strange. . . . Before he could speak English, his Korean pronunciation was so clear, even though he was two years old. Now, his Korean pronunciation, especially at the end of a sentence, has become so clumsy.

The interview with Myungwoo’s mother revealed that she was struggling over whether she should use English or Korean at home. She wanted to encourage her son to use English for his school adjustment, but she also worried that this encouragement would cause him to lose his heritage language, as his Korean pronunciation became strange over time. His increasingly unclear pronunciation might show that he had lost his heritage language, and in turn might hinder his communication with his mother and drive them apart.

Similar to what Qin (2006) found in her study of parent-child relationships in Chinese immigrant families, Korean immigrant caregivers were concerned that a child’s loss of the heritage language might result in his or her emotional detachment from the family. Seonil’s mother shared her fear:

**Interview transcripts: 02/19/2008**

I said to Seonil, “Mom’s and Dad’s English may not be good [enough to communicate with you] when you’re grown up because you will speak English very well then. You need to learn Korean for me and dad.” Then Seonil told me, “Then, Mom, why don’t you
study English?” I laughed. However, I’m concerned about my relationship with my son in the future.

Although Seonil’s parents have lived in the United States for 10 years and feel comfortable communicating with others in English, they still have fears and concerns that the acculturation gap between themselves and Seonil will create communication problems at some point. Similarly, Soojung’s mother also shared her concerns about Soojung’s future:

Interview transcripts: 02/19/2008

Because she is a Korean, she should speak in Korean. [Although] children are born here, they need to know their heritage language and heritage culture. It is not going to be enough to teach [the Korean language] at home. I know it because I’ve lived here since I was young. At a certain point, Korean is naturally forgotten and English becomes more comfortable . . . Already, Soojung’s older brother can’t speak Korean. I’m afraid Soojung will also forget Korean soon. Although there are increasing numbers of Korean people, restaurants, and markets [around this community], these things alone do not provide our children with access to the Korean language and culture. This place [the heritage language program] provides such access.

Soojung’s mother, who speaks English fluently, believed that her daughter needed to speak both languages (Korean and English) because she felt that losing one’s heritage language might mean losing one’s heritage identity. Thus, regardless of the English proficiency of the Korean immigrant caregivers, each expressed fears and concerns about their children’s detachment from the family and ethnic community.
In addition, the teachers and school staff agreed with the caregivers that language would influence the bonds between the family members. Mrs. Lee, the teacher of the religious education program, expressed her view on this issue:

**Interview transcripts: 03/22/2008**

*Whether the language is English or Korean, there should be one language that family members can use to clearly communicate with each other so that parents can talk with their children and understand their feelings. If some parents feel that they have difficulty in understanding their children now, then what will happen later? I think most mothers [in the heritage language school] are more fluent in Korean [because they are native Korean]; teaching Korean to their children is necessary [and an easier path]. If a mother communicates with her child in either Korean or English well, she can understand the child and take care of her child later. If the mother speaks in English very well, that’s fine because she can understand her child with that language. But, if she does not speak English well and her child does not learn Korean, the path to communication between them will be blocked.*

Researchers have reported that children in immigrant families quickly adopt the culture of the host society and lose their heritage culture (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997). One of the main elements in this acculturation process is language acquisition. As a result of their children’s rapid acculturation, immigrant families often fear that “their children will leave them, become like other American youth, and forget about their roots” (Zhou, p. 83). Like other immigrant families, the caregivers in this study believed that language was a critical factor in maintaining strong ties with their children.
In the following transcript, Fr. Shin shared the fears many immigrant caregivers have about their own acculturation:

Interview transcripts: 12/09/2007

The more the children grow up, the more the parents feel emotional distance and difficulty in communicating with their children. When the children grow up further, it’s hard to handle it . . . From my perspective, the caregivers have [their own] uncertainties . . . They are afraid of American culture [as much as they have concerns about their children’s adjustment to the host society]. Knowingly or unknowingly, they experience tension between their own and their children’s adjustment.

As Fr. Shin explained, immigrant caregivers worried about their own adjustment to the host culture. Unlike new immigrants, however, the caregivers in this study have lived in the United States on average for more than ten years, and most of them had no communication problems in English; some began living in the host society when they were very young. Nonetheless, these caregivers still felt a sense of alienation from the host society. This indicates that concerns and fears expressed by the caregivers did not stem from language barriers per se.

The Heritage Language as a Safety Net

My interviews with the caregivers of the participant children in this study revealed that other structural and cultural barriers, besides the language barrier, experienced by the immigrant families made them worry about their children’s futures in the host society. The caregivers’ awareness of the structural and cultural barriers, based upon their own and vicarious experiences, led them to believe that their children might return to the Korean community someday due to their failed adjustment to the host society. Hyonmin’s mother shared her thoughts about this issue in the following transcript:
Like returning [home], how can I express that? Perhaps, homing? If the children speak English well and live here [in the United States], where would they go later [when they have trouble]? When he [Hyonmin] comes back [to the Korean community], he may struggle if he doesn’t know Korean people and the language . . . I want his path to be easy rather than difficult . . . Even when Koreans get good jobs in the host society, they attend a Korean church . . . Even when they graduate from a prestigious university like Harvard, they eventually work in the Korean community. That’s the reality.

Hyonmin’s mother perceived that the experiences of other Korean immigrant caregivers with older children seemed to influence caregivers with younger children. Such stories often led parents of younger children to develop concerns about their children’s lives in the host society. Junsung’s mother shared what she had learned from other Korean parents in the following transcript:

W school is a very famous private school in our town. It’s called the school for White children even by White people. I heard that a Korean family was frustrated with inability to register their child at the school. When the mother tried, the school demanded that she bring IQ test results. . . . The school asked another Korean mother, who wanted to enroll her child, whether it was OK for her child to attend the school because most students are White and other ethnicities, including African-American and Asian, are very rare . . . After hearing these comments about the school, how can mothers send their children there?
In fact, Junsung’s mother had had her son on the W school waiting list for a while, but had received no response. After hearing about other Korean parents’ experience with this school, she gave up and sent her son to another school.

These examples indicate that the caregivers have both expectations for their children’s successful adjustment and fears for their children’s failure in the host society. If their children fail to adjust to the host society, the caregivers believed that these children might return to the Korean community. Hyonmin’s mother explained Korean caregivers’ fears and concerns, using a metaphor that I quoted earlier and present here again:

**Interview transcripts: 03/02/2008**

*As salmon are born in a river, migrate to the sea, and then return to the river, my children were born here and will try their best to enter the mainstream society. However, they may eventually come back to the Korean community.*

The example of Hyonmin’s mother shows how the caregivers applied dual expectations to their children: On the one hand, they wanted their children to enter the host society through a successful adjustment despite worries that their children will become estranged from their family and ethnic community. On the other hand, the caregivers could not ignore their anxiety over the possibility that their children might fail to adjust fully to the host society. As a result, the caregivers attempted to construct safety nets within the ethnic community for their children’s futures. These immigrant caregivers’ worries about their children’s lives were linked to their own or vicarious experiences of discrimination and stereotypes.

Indeed, the caregivers believed that if their children knew their heritage language the potential challenges and struggles of returning to the Korean community would be lessened. From these caregivers' perspectives, maintaining the heritage language was like equipping their
children with a protective tool to avoid issues stemming from unsuccessful acculturation in the host society. In addition, they believed that the heritage language would also provide their children with comfort and resilience to restart their lives within the heritage cultural community. What Jessica’s grandmother shared in the following transcript is a vivid illustration of how the immigrant families linked the heritage language to their children’s identity:

**Interview transcripts: 02/26/2008**

*When Jessica’s father was 2 years old—now he is 35 years old—I came to the United States. At that time, there were few Korean people and Korean churches. I raised him in a complete American style, like American children in an American town, but I think I failed [in my parenting] . . . He grew up without knowing any Korean traditions, like the old customs . . . That’s something that my son is looking for now. He said that he lived like an American . . . If he forgets that he is an Asian, I mean, a Korean, then, his life becomes difficult. That’s the reality. Although others consider my son an Asian, he actually lived without knowing that . . . That’s the reason why I failed . . . So we’ve decided that we’ll raise Jessica as a Korean.*

By the time Jessica’s father attended middle school, he had lost his heritage culture and his contact with the Korean community was greatly reduced. Jessica’s grandmother had difficulty in communicating with her son and felt an emotional distance from him because of the communication problem. After Jessica, a biracial child, was born, Jessica’s father began to want to learn about his heritage culture and community in much the same manner as Hyonmin’s mother described in her allegory of the “salmon’s cycle.” Based on her own experience with her son, Jessica’s grandmother agreed that Jessica needed to learn Korean language and culture. She believed that Jessica might want to know about Korean culture once she grew up, just as
Jessica’s father did. Jessica’s grandmother’s perspective echoes Kim, Sawdey, and Meihoefer’s (1980) argument that Korean-Americans return to their heritage language and cultural identity when they are not completely assimilated into the host society.

The caregivers in this study saw the heritage language school as a tool for developing their children’s cultural identity. For example, Yongjae’s mother enrolled her son in the heritage language school due to her experience with Yongjae’s older sister, a first grader. As she expressed in the following transcript, Yongjae’s mother worried that Yongjae would lose his Korean identity:

Interview transcripts: 02/24/2008

One day Yongjae’s older sister asked me, “Mom, am I Chinese?” She told me that someone at the school asked her, “Are you Chinese?” and she answered, “Yes.” Before that moment, I had not emphasized our Korean ways or identity very much. After that incident, however, I started to emphasize who they [Yongjae and his sister] are. Every two years, we try to visit Korea and introduce them to Korean culture and goods . . . So I don’t want Yongjae to follow in his sister’s footsteps.

Yongjae’s mother felt that building a strong Korean identity was very important for her children’s future, and that the heritage language is critical to the process of identity formation. These caregivers’ perspectives on the heritage language and cultural identity parallel the findings of other studies (e.g., Cho, 2000; Kim, 1992; Lee, 2002; Tse, 1997), which revealed that maintaining children’s heritage language helps construct their cultural identity.

Looking closer, the caregivers showed subtly different attitudes toward heritage language and social barriers depending on the length of their U.S. residency and immigrant histories. In general, the caregivers who had lived longer in the United States (e.g., Jessica’s grandmother,
Junsung’s mother) considered heritage language as a stronger safety net than did other caregivers with shorter U.S. residency (e.g., Yongjae’s mother). This might stem from the fact that the caregivers with longer U.S. residency have more experiences of social barriers and constraints in their lives than others with shorter U.S. residency. In addition, Yongjae’s mother and Seonil’s mother expressed fewer concerns about social constraints and barriers than other caregivers, and they tended to show the weakest view of heritage language as a safety net among the caregivers. Unlike other caregivers, they decided to live in the United States after finishing their advanced studies. Their immigrant histories, in which most of their lives in the United States had been spent as international students studying at a U.S. university, might have prevented them from being fully exposed to social barriers and constraints, and resulted in their lesser emphasis on the idea of heritage language as a safety net. There were also subtle differences among the caregivers who had lived in the United States after their marriages. Hyonmin’s mother and Myungwoo’s mother tended to be more sensitive to social barriers and constraints and had a stronger view of heritage language as a safety net than Joohee’s mother. Unlike the families of Hyonmin and Myungwoo, Joohee’s family was more acculturated into the host society considering Joohee’s family’s background. This different family background might have produced these subtle differences among the three caregivers.

*The Heritage Language School as a Shelter for Social and Emotional Support*

The caregivers in this study also believed that the heritage language school offered social and emotional support that their child might not garner from the formal school. The caregivers wanted their children to live successful lives by meeting the different expectations of both the host society and the ethnic community. They generally sought academic support from the host
society, and social and emotional support from the Korean community. Hyonmin’s mother articulated this perspective in the following transcript:

Interview transcripts: 03/02/2008

So, I decided to divide [things into English or Korean]. Well, things like study and school are conducted in the English community way. Things like the heritage language, his friends, and church are conducted in the Korean way. I separate these two ways of doing things.

These remarks reveal the immigrant caregivers’ perceptions that formal schooling does not provide their children with strong social and emotional support systems. According to the interviews with these caregivers, most children had few opportunities outside of the formal school to meet and play with children of other racial/ethnic groups. In particular, the caregivers felt that their children had very few opportunities to play with European-American children. Therefore, the children’s limited social network led the caregivers to expect more social and emotional support from the heritage language school.

Hyonmin’s mother’s decision illustrated above echoes the difficulties that Seonil’s mother experienced. When Seonil started to attend a predominantly White daycare center, he joined a class in which he was the only Asian. Seonil’s mother found that the other children had already formed play groups. These play groups had enabled the children’s caregivers to be connected outside of the classroom. She observed that Seonil struggled to join the play groups at the beginning of the school year. Seonil’s mother shared her struggle with helping her son adjust to the new daycare center:
Interview transcripts: 02/19/2008

I frequently contacted the teacher and participated in school activities including volunteering at the center. . . . I thought that play groups [in the classroom] could be reconstructed with the teacher’s guidance . . . Unfortunately, It was hard for me to enter any play group [which included the children’s mothers outside of the classroom] because the American mothers had already forged a intimate alliance and tended to focus only on letting their child play with other members of the play group.

As illustrated by Hyonmin’s and Seonil’s mothers, the Korean caregivers had great difficulty in helping their children build various relationships with their American peers in the formal school setting. Consequently, the caregivers envisioned the heritage language school as a safety zone for supporting their child’s social and emotional development. In fact, the social and emotional support provided by the heritage language school was extended to the caregivers themselves. As Yongjae’s mother explained in the transcript below, many immigrant families attend Korean church in order to maintain a sense of belonging:

Interview transcripts: 02/24/2008

[Our] family comes to this Korean church, [and Youngjae attends the heritage language school]. When I go to the American church, I feel like a guest. Although I attend the same church with Americans, there is little I can do in the church community. As a guest, it makes me feel like I just come and go and take help from them. Here in the Korean church, however, I am not a guest. I feel more actively engaged here–It’s more give-and-take.

The caregivers felt they could not build a strong sense of belonging in the host society because they had limited access to resources and networks for their and their child’s social and emotional
support. In this context, as Shibata (2000) explained, the heritage language school seemed to signify more than a just place to learn the heritage language. The Korean heritage language school in this study provided both the caregivers and their children with social and emotional support as well as a much needed sense of belonging.

The social and emotional support that the caregivers expected and received from the heritage school community was also related to the fact that, in this community, the families shared the same or similar cultural expectations and rules about children’s interactions. Hyonmin’s mother articulated one of the reasons why she felt comfortable with her son’s peer interactions in the heritage language school:

**Interview transcripts: 03/02/2008**

*When Hyonmin plays with American children and accidentally bumps himself against them, I feel very nervous and afraid . . . Although Hyonmin would never initiate a fight on purpose, I still feel nervous. For example, if he goes into the playhouse at McDonald’s, and if one or two American children are there, I keep a close eye on him to make sure that there isn’t any conflict. Whenever a situation arises—even if it’s a really minor incident—I ask Hyonmin to say, “sorry,” to the American children. That’s etiquette . . . But I want Hyomin to play comfortably within the Korean community. In our community, even those [potentially problematic] situations can be generously accepted and understood. I feel really uncomfortable [in the American society that] I always have to say, “sorry,” even with really minor incidents . . . [The heritage language school] allows him to play with others [Korean children] easily. But this does not mean that we [Korean children] play very rough . . . It just seems that the shared rules of play are different.*
Hyonmin’s mother wanted her son to be aware of the cultural differences in play between Korean and American children. She was concerned that her son’s actions might be misconstrued during play time in his public pre-kindergarten classroom. However, she believed that the heritage language school would provide her son with a safe and comfortable play environment through the Korean adults’ shared understanding of proper behaviors in children’s play.

Similarly, Soojung’s mother also explained that she enrolled Soojung in the heritage language school because she wanted her daughter to “meet others at ease and joyfully play with them rather than just learning the Korean language” (Interview, 03/22/2008). Myungwoo’s mother wanted her son to “play easily with other children” (Interview, 02/17/2008) in the heritage language school as well. Like Hyonmin’s mother, Myungwoo’s mother also expressed her nervousness about different etiquette for play among American and Korean children:

**Interview transcripts: 02/17/2008**

*When Myungwoo is in a play group with American children, or even at the McDonald’s playhouse, I feel nervous because Myungwoo might go to touch or do something to them. I follow him and keep repeating, “Play gentle. Play gentle.” I feel really uncomfortable about the cultural difference [between the way he plays and the way American children play]. I have to follow him wherever he goes, reminding him [to be gentle].*

Myungwoo’s mother’s discomfort was magnified by an incident that Myungwoo had at his formal school. Here, the cultural views of the school personnel toward Myungwoo’s behavior were markedly different from his mother’s view of the same behavior:

**Interview transcripts: 02/17/2008**

*When Myungwoo went to a school [daycare center] first, he had notes sent home. I got notes from the school that Myungwoo frequently touched others. When we [Korean*
children] play with each other, it’s natural that they often hug others and grasp others’ hands. However, he was scolded at the school if he tried to do that. He should not touch others at school [from the school’s perspective]. It’s different [from Korean culture]. We [Koreans] touch each other when we like each other. I have said to Myungwoo, “Please hug him and love him,” whenever he meets a Korean child . . . Myungwoo must have gotten many warnings from the school about “touching” because he often says, “No touch. No touch.” at home.

Myungwoo started to attend the daycare center when he was two years old. In his first semester, the daycare director suggested to Myungwoo’s mother that she should consult with a physician to see whether he had Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or a learning disability. The director reported that Myungwoo often moved around the classroom or tried to leave it. Myungwoo’s parents took him to a doctor and eventually learned that he was completely normal:

Interview transcripts: 02/17/2008

According to the teacher, Myungwoo didn’t even speak Korean. Myungwoo didn’t speak Korean because, I think, the other children didn’t seem to understand him. But the teacher told me that he didn’t speak at all. The teacher thought that he might be autistic . . . The symptoms of ADHD were also similar to his behavior. When the door opened, he tried to go out. But he was only two years old! . . . He didn’t enjoy the school and he didn’t understand English . . . He was the only Korean child in the classroom at that time. I’m always concerned about matters like this when he’s at the [American] school.
Myungwoo was an extremely inquisitive and easily delighted child. When he was in the English-speaking daycare center, however, Myungwoo was perceived as having a disability due to the difference between rigid rules of American early schooling and his own “touching culture” (Medina, Lozano, and Goudena, 2001, p. 154). As McDermott and Varenne (1996) claimed, from Myungwoo’s mother’s perspective it was the daycare center, not Myungwoo’s behavior, that marked Myungwoo as disabled. The culture that Myungwoo brought into the daycare center, including the values emphasized at Myungwoo’s home (e.g., expressing positive affection through hugging) and the encouragement for his active behavior, were treated as problematic and were amplified by the language barrier. Interestingly, Myungwoo’s mother added that Myungwoo’s father had a similar experience when he was a second grader:

*Interview transcripts: 02/17/2008*

*My mother-in-law was asked to meet my husband’s teacher when he was in second grade. . . . According to the teacher, he often went out of the classroom. My mother-in-law said, “Myungwoo is the same as his father.”*

The lack of understanding about different cultural beliefs and expectations about children’s behavior demonstrated by the daycare center staff led Myungwoo’s mother to feel frustrated. She felt that her son needed a place where he could get social and emotional support. She believed the heritage language school could provide Myungwoo with such a safe and comfortable space. Instances such as this provide strong evidence that immigrant families and their children often neither receive nor know how to ask for social and emotional support from formal schools in the host society.

In summary, St. Clare Church was a place for Korean immigrant families to gain support for maintaining their heritage culture and to share various social and cultural information. The
heritage language school affiliated with the church functioned as a place where children and their caregivers could negotiate and ameliorate issues resulting from cultural differences and social barriers in their daily lives. The participant children had different language proficiencies and language use at home. Their family backgrounds were also somewhat different from each other. However, as Korean-Americans, they went through similar bicultural journeys in their lives. In addition, the caregivers’ views of their children’s heritage language learning reflected the challenges they had themselves faced as immigrants. The caregivers revealed their uncertainties and fears about their children’s futures in the host society. The caregivers wanted their children to adjust to the host culture successfully, but were simultaneously concerned about maintaining their heritage culture. The caregivers’ emphasis on the heritage language was related to their concerns about social and cultural barriers to their children’s successful futures in the host society. The immigrant caregivers perceived the heritage language school as a safety net that provided social and emotional support for both their children and themselves.
CHAPTER 5
CHILDREN’S NAMING PRACTICES IN PEER CULTURE

Field notes: 11/04/2007

This is the third class since school started this fall. The children are all sitting at tables to begin today’s lesson. The lead teacher, Miss Cho, calls the class roll in Korean and asks the children to answer, “Yes,” in Korean. However, the children do not immediately respond to their names when the teacher calls them. Some respond to the teacher when she switches their Korean names to English names. When the teacher calls “Junsung,” Junsung does not respond to her and instead looks at his classmates. The teacher switches to his English name, Paul, and he answers, “Yes,” in Korean.

My interest in the role of children’s naming practices in peer relations began at the beginning of the Fall semester of 2007. As the above excerpt indicates, the children in the pre-kindergarten classroom of the heritage language school experienced some confusion over their different names. Some children did not recognize their Korean names, but responded promptly to their English names.

This incident additionally recalled another incident that occurred when I went to St. Clare Church to explore the possibility of starting my study of Korean-American children’s peer culture. I met Junsung’s mother in front of the pre-kindergarten classroom of the heritage language school. When I asked her name, she answered, “I’m Mary Park.” I, as a Korean, was struck by her answer because I did not expect to hear her biblical name. Although I knew that
Korean Catholic parishioners have English baptismal names, I was curious about why she did not tell me her real Korean name rather than her biblical name. I, too, introduced myself as “Clare Kim,” my baptismal name. Reflecting on this incident, I immediately interpreted “Mary” as a baptismal name rather than a secular name used in the United States. This interpretation stemmed in part from the fact that the incident occurred during our meeting at the church building and that we shared our religion. Her introduction as “Mary Park” did not match my taken-for-granted expectation (i.e., that she would introduce herself with her given Korean name as most Koreans do).

The two incidents in the beginning of the study made me wonder how children’s naming practices function in children’s peer culture, how children’s and their caregivers’ naming practices might be interwoven with each other and affect how children create and negotiate social and cultural knowledge from the adult world, and how the naming practices might reflect and affect their relationships with others and their identities. Through my data analysis, I learned that examining these children’s naming practices allows for a better understanding of their peer culture. In addition, I found that these young Korean-American children’s naming practices revealed the values and beliefs held by their caregivers as well as contributing to the children’s construction of individual selves. For this reason, in this chapter I focus on my findings regarding Korean-American children’s naming practices and the influence of these practices on these children’s peer culture.

Before extensively discussing children’s naming practices in peer culture, I introduce the Korean immigrant caregivers’ naming practices. In the first section, I describe the cultural beliefs and values of the caregivers embedded in their naming practices and the perspectives of the caregivers on names in the host society. A close examination of the caregivers’ naming practices
is critical to understanding children’s naming practices because social and cultural knowledge embedded in adults’ naming practices influences children and is in turn interpreted and negotiated within children’s peer culture. In the second section, I turn my attention to the children’s world by discussing how children are situated in different contexts with different names and how children’s names relate to their sense of self. Finally, in the third section, I examine how the children negotiate adults’ naming practices and what children’s naming practices mean to the children’s peer culture and peer relations.

Korean Immigrant Caregivers’ Naming Practices

Naming a child is a practice taken for granted in many cultures. It can be defined as a cultural practice that is repeated or habitual in each individual’s life; it is thought of as a natural thing that social members do (Shweder et al., 1998). Naming is a “meaningful action . . . situated in a [particular] context” (Miller & Goodnow, 1995, p. 6), and is not an arbitrary labeling action (Rymes, 1996). Although names may be chosen by different social members (e.g., couples, paternal or maternal family members, and community members) and may be based on the individual’s tastes, names explicitly or implicitly reflect the shared values and beliefs of a cultural community.

Scholars have asserted that naming practices are influenced by cultural values and beliefs in a given context (Alford, 1988; Goodenough, 1965; Lieberson & Bell, 1992; Stahl, 1992; Su & Telles, 2007; Suzman, 1994). For example, Alford examined European-American mothers’ name choices and attitudes toward naming in Oklahoma. He found that boys tended to be given more kin names than girls and that girls tended to have more aesthetic names. Supporting Rossi’s study (1965), Alford stated that the naming practices for boys reflected the traditional son’s roles as “perpetuators and symbols of family continuity and prestige” (p. 132).
In addition, Suzman (1994) found that Zulu children in urban environments in South Africa are given less traditional names than those in rural environments. Zulu children traditionally had unique names “reflect[ing] values and attitudes within particular social contexts” (p. 255) with regard to the circumstances surrounding their birth. As Suzman explained by way of example, “if a small snake happens to be seen or killed when a [Zulu] boy is born, he is called as *Unyokana*, ‘a little snake’” (as cited in Tyler, 1981, p. 33). However, Suzman found that the Western acculturation process has led to a decrease in the use of uniquely contextual names. Instead, Zulu children in urban areas have increasingly been given Christian-inspired names. Suzman’s study showed that naming as a cultural practice reflects particular values and changes in a cultural community.

*Cultural Values and Beliefs Reflected in Korean-American Children’s Names*

Considering that children first learn sociocultural values, beliefs, and knowledge from the adult world, children’s names chosen by adults and adults’ naming practices can provide useful insights into the values, beliefs, and cultural knowledge held by caregivers in an ethnic community. According to Alford (1988), most children in the United States are given names by their parents and are “usually named before they are seven days old” (p. 167). Lieberson (2000) stated that “‘American naming practices’ are nothing more than the names in use by the descendants of all of the immigrants who have preceded the latest migration wave” (p. 175). In contrast, the Korean immigrant caregivers in this study conducted serious discussions about what the best name for their children would be in the context of their family, particularly with senior family members such as the children’s grandparents. Some parents asked a Korean shamanist, or *Mu-soc-in*, what names might be more advantageous for their children. The *Mu-soc-in* would suggest some possible names for a child by considering the child’s and parents’ birth days and
birth times. This is a deeply rooted and traditional Korean cultural practice. No matter which route they took, the Korean parents would choose one of the suggested names based on what they believed might be good for their child’s future life.\textsuperscript{15} Some Korean parents used a nickname, \textit{Taemyung}, until their child was born and they decided their child’s official first name. For example, Seonil’s mother told me, “\textit{We did not decide Seonil’s Korean name until he was born. So, we called him a ‘whale’ as Taemyung}” (Interview, 02/19/2008). According to Seonil’s mother, Seonil’s grandmother dreamed about a big whale swimming in the sea before he was born. For the family, this dream indicated that Seonil would later be a symbolically and physically big person, as big as a whale. As illustrated by these descriptions, Koreans spend considerable effort and time in selecting their children’s names by reflecting what they value and hope for their children’s future lives.

In this study, all participant children had at least two names, including an English name, a Korean name, and/or a religious name (although not all of these names might be formally recorded) (see Table 5.1).

\textsuperscript{15} Traditionally, Korean names have consisted of two logographic \textit{Hanja} characters based on Chinese characters (The Korean orthography includes alphabetic Hangul and logographic Hanja scripts). Each \textit{Hanja} character carries particular meanings. Recently, children’s names have also been chosen from Korean \textit{Hangul} characters. Even if a person’s name has the same pronunciation as another person’s name, the two names can often have completely different meanings. Korean parents choose their child’s name with a strong belief that their child will grow into it.
Table 5.1

Different Names of Participant Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Birthday</th>
<th>Korean Name</th>
<th>English Name</th>
<th>Biblical Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>12/27/2002</td>
<td>Kyuwon Oh</td>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>05/28/2003</td>
<td>Junsung Park</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>07/15/2003</td>
<td>Yongjae Choi</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>09/09/2003</td>
<td>Hyonmin Cho</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Simon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>05/07/2004</td>
<td>Myungwoo Shon</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>05/19/2004</td>
<td>Seonil Jang</td>
<td>Steve</td>
<td>Emanuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10/16/2004</td>
<td>Wonkyu Min</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>02/16/2003</td>
<td>Joohee Lee</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Sophia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>06/24/2003</td>
<td>Boyong Min</td>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>07/22/2003</td>
<td>Soojung Kim</td>
<td>Marianna</td>
<td>Marianna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>04/08/2004</td>
<td>Joohee Lee</td>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Agnes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the children’s Korean names, most caregivers interviewed revealed their belief that their children would grow into a person corresponding to the meaning of his or her Korean name. Interviews with the caregivers provided insights into how their cultural values and beliefs influenced the selection of their children’s names, and how the name selection reflected their expectations for their children’s future lives. In the following transcript, Seonil’s mother shared how both her son’s Korean and English names were decided.

Interview transcripts: 02/19/2008

The common name Steve has good meanings—bright and smart. From my perspective, there should be something vitally embedded in names. I believe that a child grows into
his name. So, I think it’s really important to give a child the name that specifically suits him or her. For this reason, I chose [an English] name Steve. [The Korean name] Seonil came with a similar meaning. . . . The meaning of Seonil is to become an outstanding scholar. Seon means “becoming accomplished” and Il means “a scholar.” So, I expect that he will become an accomplished person academically. When he had his first birthday, he grasped a pencil, too.16

Seonil’s mother had a strong desire that her son would be successful as a scholar. She was very interested in making Seonil a scholar and was aware of good resources and information for Seonil’s future scholarly life. For example, because of her concern about Seonil’s future academic achievement, she sent him to an institution for school readiness where he could learn English and other academic skills when he was only two years old. Seonil’s mother’s values and expectations were clearly reflected in the selection of her son’s names.

Unlike Seonil’s parents, who chose their child’s Korean name by themselves, some caregivers consulted with their family members and Mu-soc-in about possible names for their child, as explained above. The interviews with Myungwoo’s mother, for example, showed how much she desired to give the best name to her son, even when she was delivering him in the hospital.

Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

Before I gave a birth to him, I asked my mother in Korea to choose a good Korean name for him. She gave me two different names, but I didn’t like either of them [and delayed

16 In Korea, a baby’s first birthday has a particular custom that parents arrange different objects for a baby to pick up. There are beliefs that the baby will grow into a person corresponding to the symbolic meaning of the object he or she chooses. For example, if a baby grasps a pencil, it is believed that he or she will grow to be a good scholar. If a baby grasps a ball of thread, it is believed that he or she will have a healthy long life.
the decision]. Immediately after I gave a birth to him at the hospital, I called my mother again to ask another good name. Fortunately, she gave me the name, Myungwoo . . .

Myungwoo has meanings such as “outstanding” and “bright.” So, he’ll have a shining life.

Myungwoo’s mother gave her son a name based on her belief that Myungwoo’s future would be bright as his name indicated. Myungwoo’s case also showed how much caregivers’ values and beliefs were infused into their selection of a child’s name. Similarly, Kyuwon’s father shared how he and his wife chose their son’s name by researching Korean Hangul characters and their meanings on the internet. They did so with the hope that Kyuwon would righteously grow into his name. His name symbolizes a pine tree, which represents “spirit,” “integrity,” and “a long life” in the traditional Korean cultural context. The following transcript shows my dialogue with Kyuwon’s father and grandmother about the meanings of both Kyuwon’s and his brother’s names:

Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

Jinhee: How was Kyuwon’s name decided?

Kyuwon’s father: Kyuwon means a graceful pine tree.

Kyuwon’s grandmother: Kyuseon [Kyuwon’s older brother] means the sun and a pine tree.

Kyuwon’s father: For Kyuseon, we hope that he will have a bright life like the sun.

For Jessica, a biracial child, having a Korean name had a significant symbolic meaning in and of itself because a Korean name provided her with membership in the ethnic community. Jessica’s grandmother described how Jessica’s Korean name was chosen in the transcript presented below.
Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

Jessica’s father chose her English name. I heard that the origin of her name came from Australia. . . . I asked my brother in Korea for Jessica’s Korean name. I received three different Korean names and chose Joohee. It was the prettiest name that matched her well . . . The name means “being insightful,” and she will become an insightful child.

Jessica got her Korean name when she was one year old when her father began living with Jessica’s grandmother after his divorce. Jessica’s grandmother explained how she and her son decided to raise Jessica as a Korean by giving her a Korean name:

Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

When my son started meeting Korean people and decided that we would raise her as a Korean, we asked my family in Korea for a Korean name . . . One year after her birth, we gave her a Korean name. Before, we called her Jessica . . . My friends are Koreans, and all children [in the heritage school] are Korean children. When she [Jessica] goes to middle school and has many friends, she may not use her Korean name. However, I believe that she will use [the Korean name] later and seek other Korean people like my son. Because of my son’s history, I think that Jessica needs a Korean name. My son also agrees with this idea.

As illustrated by these examples, children’s Korean names reflect their caregivers’ cultural values and beliefs as well as the caregivers’ expectations for their children’s future lives. In addition, Korean names function as an insignia of membership in the Korean community where, the caregivers hoped, the children would learn their ethnic cultural values and maintain their ethnic cultural identities.
Religion Reflected in English Names

In addition to having Korean names, all of the participant children also had English names. Many of the children’s English names chosen by the caregivers in this study revealed their family religion, as noted by Bodenhorn and Bruck (2006). For example, except for two children who did not have baptismal names, five children had the same English names as their baptismal names (see Table 5.1), and four children had baptismal names different from their English names.

Given that all of the caregivers in this study were Catholic parishioners, choosing a name for their child that reflects their religion was considered natural. Some caregivers even tried to find a saint who had the same birthday as their child. Others considered special meanings or spiritual works related to saints to choose their child’s baptismal name. In the following transcripts, several caregivers shared how they chose their child’s baptismal name.

Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

*My husband chose the English name, Peter, because he is the gift from God and because the name has meaning... My family uses biblical names [because of our religion] and it’s good, if a biblical name is the same as the English name.* (Interview with Myungwoo’s mother)

Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

*When I was pregnant, I chose one of the saints' names. I wanted him to have a saint name. Paul is one of the saint names that I considered... [His Korean name] Junsung might be difficult to pronounce. If there was an easy [Korean] name to pronounce, an English name would not have been considered. We [as Catholic parishioners] need to choose a baptismal name when we’re baptized. So I think [choosing] his baptismal name*
[which could be used as his English name] was considered natural. I have never thought about the possibility that he would not have a baptismal name. That’s why he is Paul-Junsung Park. (Interview with Junsung’s mother)

Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

[The English name] Simon comes from a baptismal name. When counting the baptismal name, I realized Hyonmin could have three names. So, I decided to use my children’s baptismal names as their English names. That way, Hyonmin and his younger sister could have two names. I think having three different names would make things somewhat difficult for them. (Interview with Hyonmin’s mother)

As these transcripts reveal, many caregivers chose their child’s English name as a reflection of their religion as Catholic parishioners.

Names and Assimilation into the Host Society

Lieberson (2000) stated that the names of individuals from different ethnic groups in the United States often reflect their degree of assimilation into the mainstream culture. He explained that immigrants tend to avoid selecting names that sound alien to people of the dominant cultural group, and that Korean immigrants in particular tend to give their American-born children biblical names. As explained in the previous section, the caregivers in this study gave their children English baptismal names. The interview transcripts presented above also reveal that some caregivers (e.g., Junsung’s mother, Hyonmin’s mother) gave their child an English name out of a pragmatic concern over the difficulty that English speakers might have in pronouncing their child’s Korean name. This concern reflected the caregivers’ own experiences as immigrants. All caregivers continued using their Korean names on formal documents, but some
caregivers described the difficulties they had experienced when using their Korean names in the host society. In the following transcript, Myungwoo’s mother shared her experiences.

Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

That [English name] is necessary for a social life [in the host society]. I feel uncomfortable [using my Korean name] because many times I have to spell out part of my name, “Byung.” When I’ve heard their [non-Korean speakers’] pronunciations of “Byung,” I feel uncomfortable. I always feel nervous because my name is inaccurately pronounced. They don’t seem to treat me differently when I say, “I’m Sarah,” because they know I’m a foreigner when [I talk to them and] they see me. When I say my English name, it’s good because they can address me easily and quickly . . . Sometimes, I see how my [Korean] name is difficult [for English speakers] to pronounce in the same way that I have difficulty in pronouncing their . . . names.

Similarly, Junsung’s mother had experienced difficulties in using her Korean name because many Korean people have names similar to hers. In addition, part of her first name has been misunderstood as her middle name. For example, “Hee” of her full name, “Young-Hee Park,” has been easily mistaken for her middle name unless she emphasizes that her first name is Younghee:

Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

There are many people with the name, Young Park. For example, when you go to Blockbuster, there are so many Young Parks. I’ve heard that there are almost 20 people with the same name, Young Park, registered in the Blockbuster near my house. Also, one [with similar name as Young-Ki Park] has been listed on my credit [report] . . . Still it
makes me feel sick. [Because of all these reasons], I think having an English name is really necessary.

From these caregivers’ perspectives, giving a child an English name helps him or her avoid difficulties the caregivers themselves have experienced. At the same time, they wanted to keep their children’s Korean names by formally using them as middle names or privately using them at home. In keeping with Alford’s (1988) assertion that a society provides a child with its membership and social identity through naming practices, the caregivers in this study considered a Korean name to be critical to a child’s membership in the Korean community. The following interview with Hyonmin’s mother illustrates how the caregivers regarded their children’s Korean and English names as symbols of membership in both the ethnic community and the host society:

Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

It is for [my son] to prevent him from forgetting both names. For example, Simon is the name that he will keep using for a living [in the host society] while Hyonmin is not likely to be used by others except for family members at home. Hyonmin is used as his middle name. . . . There is no possibility that we’re going back to Korea because my husband has lived as a U.S. citizen for a long time. So, [having] an English name in this society is important in that sense. We’re not leaving the Korean community here [in the host society], either.

By keeping both an English and Korean name, Hyonmin’s mother expected her son to maintain a balance between being a member of both the ethnic community and the host society.

Jessica’s grandmother also mentioned that Jessica’s Korean name would allow her biracial granddaughter to enter the Korean community and actively interact with Koreans now and in the future. Repeating how “[she] failed” (Interview, 02/26/2008) in her parenting,
Jessica’s grandmother expressed her regret that she had rarely kept in touch with the Korean community while raising Jessica’s father. Jessica’s grandmother and father both believed that Jessica’s Korean name would be the key to her connection to the Korean community.

The caregivers’ perspectives on their children’s names in this study paralleled the findings of other immigrant studies on the relationship between naming practices and assimilation into the host society (e.g., Aceto, 2002; Lieberson, 2000; Su & Telles, 2007). Su and Telles, for example, examined the 1995 California Birth Records, including the full names of children and their parents. Similarly to the findings of Lieberson’s study, these authors found that Hispanic immigrants tend to choose somewhat outdated names, the ones once very popular among European-Americans. They also found that Hispanic boys born in the States are more likely to have English names that are translatable into Spanish than are Hispanic girls. They explained that U.S.-born Hispanic children, particularly boys, are situated in “a middle ground between assimilation and ethnic maintenance” (p. 1402) because their parents expect their sons to be assimilated into the host society less rapidly than their daughters. Thus, the children’s English and Korean names given by the caregivers in this study reflected “a powerful sociological indicator of sociocultural assimilation” (Su & Telles, 2007, p. 1384) into the host society as well as “a connection to the ethnic community” (p. 1410). By giving both English and Korean names, the caregivers in this study revealed their desire to both maintain their children’s bond with the ethnic community and smooth their children’s adjustment to the host society.

Thus, the children’s names reflected both the caregivers’ expectations of how their children would grow up and the caregivers’ desire to establish a balance between the Korean ethnic and American cultures.
Children’s Different Names in Different Contexts

The Korean-American children in this study were situated both within a specific context and across different contexts. In formal school settings, they were called by their English names; at home and in the Korean heritage language school, however, they were addressed using their Korean and/or English names. The use of different names in different contexts provided insight into how the children develop “situated or contextualized selves” (Walsh, 2002, p. 103).

Struggle with Different Naming Practices Used in Different Contexts

Interviews with the caregivers revealed that some children were unfamiliar with naming practices different from those used in their homes. For example, Hyonmin’s mother articulated how her son was addressed differently outside of home, and how different naming practices were confusing to Hyonmin as a young child:

Interview transcripts: 02/19/2008

At home, he is mainly called Hyonmin. To American people, Simon; and to Korean people, Hyonmin. Last year [when he was three years old], he didn’t seem to be able to distinguish between different names. When the daycare teacher called him Simon, the teacher told me, he did not know his name. But, according to the teacher, after one to two months he started to know his English name. When she called him Simon [at the beginning of his attendance at the daycare center], I guess he did not recognize who Simon was.

As shown in this transcript, understanding different naming practices used in different contexts is a challenging task for a preschooler. Hyonmin’s mother elaborated how different names were used in different contexts for her son:
Interview transcripts: 09/21/2008

When I go to his kindergarten, I call him Simon. When I meet Korean people, I call him Hyonmin. . . . At the places where he meets Korean people, he becomes Hyonmin. At the places such as the administrative offices and the [formal] school, he becomes Simon.

Hyonmin’s mother had a clear idea about what name should be used when and by whom. Recognizing both names and understanding when to use which name, however, was difficult for Hyonmin as a young child.

As the incident introduced at the beginning of this chapter indicates, the dissonance between naming practices at home and in the formal school settings also occurred in the pre-kindergarten classroom at the heritage language school. I expected that the children would become familiar with both of their names over time. However, four weeks after the second semester began in Spring 2008, I continued to observe a similar pattern in which some children did not respond quickly to their Korean names, as they were not quite familiar with their different names.

Field notes/Video-recording transcripts: 02/10/2008

Seven children are sitting at their tables and ready for the day’s lesson. The lead teacher, Miss Cho, distributes worksheets that ask the children to write a Korean letter and find a corresponding picture or word. Miss Jang, the assistant teacher, stands by Miss Cho. The children’s Korean names have been already written on the worksheets by the teacher. Distributing the worksheets, Miss Cho calls each child’s Korean name.

Miss Cho: OK. Where is Park, Junsung? Park, Junsung?

Junsung: (Junsung does not respond, but looks around.)
Miss Cho: Where is Junsung? (She switches to Junsung’s English name, Paul, and asks another child) Seonil, where is Paul? (While Seonil looks around, Junsung now smiles and looks at the teacher.)

Miss Cho: (Still looking around) Paul? I can’t find Junsung. Junsung. (She’s approaching Junsung) Paul, are you Junsung?

Junsung: (Receiving his worksheet and smiling) Yes.

Miss Cho: Min, Boyong. Where is Boyong?

Miss Jang: Please raise your hand.

Miss Cho: (To Boyong) Where is Boyong? Boyong. Are you Boyong?

Boyong: (Boyong does not respond to the teacher’s call and just looks at the table.)

Miss Cho: (Giving up calling Boyong and handing out Boyong’s worksheet) Here it is.

Miss Cho: Yongjae. Choi, Yongjae.

Yongjae: (Yongjae does not respond.)

Miss Cho: Where is Yongjae? (She then asks Soojung by first calling her English name)

Marian . . . (and then immediately changing to Marianna’s Korean name) No.

Soojung, where is Yongjae?

Soojung: (Soojung does not know who Yongjae is and just looks at the teacher.)

Miss Cho: (She asks Seonil) Seonil, can you let me know where Yongjae is?

Seonil: (Seonil looks around and shakes his head, indicating “no.”)

Miss Cho: (Switching to Yongjae’s English name) Jacob? (Yongjae smiles at the teacher. Then she hands a worksheet to Yongjae) Here it is, Yongjae.

Miss Cho: Where’s Jessica?
Seonil: (Even though the lead teacher didn’t ask Seonil, he immediately points to Jessica with his finger)

Jessica: (Jessica raises her hand and receives a worksheet.)

Miss Cho: (After giving worksheets to Seonil and Myungwoo, the two boys who recognized their Korean names promptly, she calls the last child’s name) Soojung.

Seonil: (Pitching his voice a little high as if he is not familiar with this name, he repeats the teacher) Soojung?

The transcripts indicate that the children had great difficulty in recognizing their own and their peers’ Korean names. For example, Junsung did not respond to the teacher until she called his English name, Paul. It was only after she posed a probing question (i.e., “Paul, are you Junsung?”), he admitted that he was also Junsung. In addition, when the teacher asked Soojung and Seonil where Yongjae was, the children could not answer. However, Seonil immediately pointed at Yongjae with his finger when the teacher switched to Yongjae’s English name, Jacob. When Seonil heard Soojung’s name, he demonstrated his unfamiliarity with this Korean name by acting as if he was hearing it for the first time. When the teacher called Jessica, however, Seonil immediately pointed to her.

The difficulty many of these children had with Korean names may well be related to their daily lives. The children attended the heritage language school only on Sundays, whereas all attended English-speaking institutions during the weekdays. Therefore, they might have had fewer opportunities to become familiar with and use their own and their heritage language school peers’ Korean names. Although the children did not attend the same preschool or kindergarten on the weekdays, the fact that they spent more time in English speaking settings where all were using their English names seemed to influence the children’s familiarity with their own and their
peers’ English names. For some children, English names seemed to be frequently used at home as well. For example, although Junsung’s mother told me that her son was addressed as both Junsung and Paul at home, I observed that he was called by his English name more often than his Korean name when I was invited to a Christmas party at his house. Most parishioners at the church more frequently used his English name and referred to his mother as Paul’s mother. Junsung’s mother reported that Junsung’s name is difficult for English-speaking people to pronounce and that Junsung himself had some difficulty pronouncing it. Junsung’s discomfort with his Korean name can be observed in the following transcript.

Field notes/Audio-recording transcripts: 02/24/08

This is free play time in the pre-kindergarten classroom of the heritage language school. I approach Junsung, who is sitting at a table where the lead teacher is reading a story to Boyong and Wonkyu.

Jinhee: (to Junsung) What’s your name?17

Junsung: Paul.

Jinhee: Paul. That’s your name.

Junsung: Yeah.

Jinhee: Do you have another name?

Junsung: (A few seconds later) Ye, Yeah.

Jinhee: What’s that?

Junsung: Huh, Paul Park.

Jinhee: Paul Park. Do you have another name?

Junsung: No. Nope.

17 I asked Junsung in English the first time because I knew he had limited proficiency with Korean.
Jinhee: What about Junsung?

Junsung: OK. I have that name.

Jinhee: That name. Why do people call you Junsung?

Junsung: Because they like to call the name. (Turning his head toward another side) I’m trying to [unintelligible] (He puts his head on his arm).

Junsung did not mention his Korean name until I brought it up. Even then, he referred to his Korean name as “that name” instead of pronouncing it. Junsung revealed his discomfort with his Korean name by avoiding further conversation about it.

Naming Practices Inside the Home

In strong contrast to existing notions about the naming practices of children from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds, the data revealed that we cannot simplify naming practices of immigrant children at home into ethnic names at home and English names outside the home context. Instead, the children’s names used at home were chosen flexibly by the caregiver’s preference based on his or her individual preferences (e.g., the caregiver’s experience in his or her life in the host society, the caregiver’s proficiency in English or Korean) and by the family composition (e.g., siblings with similar names, family members from different cultures).

For example, Junsung’s parents interacted with their son in English and used his English name at home. Kyuwon’s caregivers, however, mainly communicated with him in Korean, but called him by his English name, Eric, at home. Although Kyuwon’s grandmother had limited English proficiency, she followed the naming practice of Kyuwon’s father and used Kyuwon’s English name. Kyuwon’s father said, “Usually I call him Eric, except for the time when I have to scold him. When I reprimand him, I call him Kyuwon” (Personal communication, 09/21/2008).
Kyuwon’s Korean name might sound more formal to him because Kyuwon’s father generally called him by his English name, Eric. His father explained that Kyuwon’s Korean name was more readily used by other Korean family members, while his English name was used by others in his formal school. Kyuwon’s grandmother also explained that Kyuwon was called by his English name, Eric, at home to avoid confusion between his Korean name and his older brother’s similar Korean name:

Interview transcripts: 02/12/2008

The first child is Kyuseon. . . . The first child is more often called Kyuseon to distinguish between [the two boys], although he has his English name, Brandon. Kyuwon has been called Eric at home . . . So, Kyuwon has known Eric rather than Kyuwon as his name.

Some children were addressed differently by different family members and were mainly called by their English names at home. Soojung was one such child. She was more frequently addressed as Marianna by her family members because they were more fluent in speaking English than Korean (see Chapter 4): “In the case of Soojung, I did not particularly intend to teach Korean or English. English is mainly used at my home because her older brother can’t speak Korean” (Interview with Soojung’s mother, 02/10/2008). Joohee (Michelle) was another example. Joohee (Michelle)’s family members called her either Joohee or Michelle based on their level of language fluency. Most of Joohee’s family members, except for Joohee’s mother, rarely spoke Korean (see Chapter 4). While Joohee’s mother tended to call her daughter by her Korean name, Joohee was addressed as Michelle by her father and by other family members (e.g., European-American aunts): “I call her Joohee. Other family members call her Michelle . . . She also speaks with me in Korean. Other family members speak with her in English. As times goes by, she’s getting to know both names” (Interview with Joohee’s mother, 03/22/2008). Joohee’s
mother thought that her husband and other family members could help Joohee’s adjustment to American culture and English language acquisition, while she played the role of maintaining Joohee’s Korean cultural heritage.

*Children’s Names and Their Sense of Self*

Naming practices influence a child’s developing sense of self because “a name is, after all, a part of one’s self” (Dion, 1983, p. 251). A name can be a vehicle for shaping a child’s sense of self as he or she hears how he or she is addressed, by whom, and under what circumstance.

Drawing on cultural psychology, Shweder et al. (1998) defined self as “the mentalities and practices associated with being an ‘I’ (a subject, a person) in a particular community” (p. 896). Self has complex meanings beyond the physical and biological sense because particular values and beliefs embedded in cultural practices can be infused into one’s sense of self. Cultural psychologists argue that “the self can be conceptualized as a primary locus of culture-psyche interaction and of culture-specific being” (p. 895). These researchers emphasize the importance of paying attention to cultural practices and underlying cultural beliefs reflected in those practices in relation to the development of a cultural way of being.

One’s sense of self can be also understood in his or her relationships with other people. Shweder (1990) noted that “the process of representing the others goes hand in hand with a process of portraying one’s self itself as part of the process of representing the other, thereby encouraging an open-ended self-reflective dialogic turn of mind” (p. 34). Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) also asserted that the “self is only created in the process of recognizing and defining oneself in relation to others” (p. 91). In connection to naming practices, Alford (1988) argued:
A named child has, in a sense, a social identity. To know a child’s name, in a sense, is to know who that child is. And when the child is old enough to know his own name, he, in a sense, knows who he is. (p. 29)

Miller and Mangelsdorf (2005) also stated that “the self emerges in the crucible of social relations, but those relations are embedded in cultural contexts and mediated by language and other semiotic systems” (p. 51). Naming practices are mediated by language and semiotic systems, and a child’s name reflects social relations embedded in particular cultural contexts. According to these authors, one’s sense of self is connected to one’s social and cultural identity. Therefore, I argue that paying attention to naming practices can be a useful way of understanding a child’s developing sense of who he or she is (Dion, 1983; Goodenough, 1965; Kim, 2007; Souto-Manning, 2007; Su & Telles, 2007; Thompson, 2006).

As discussed in the previous sections, the Korean-American children in this study had two or three names, each used in different contexts. Aceto (2002) argued that multiple names influence “an imminent or latent identity . . . correlated with one or more socially constructed components, such as language, kinship, social status, ethnicity, nationality, spirituality, or gender” (p. 582). In their studies on the relation between identity and naming practices among Korean immigrant adolescents in the United States and in Canada, Thompson (2006) and Kim (2007) found that the naming practices (e.g., use of different names in different contexts) of Korean immigrants reflect the process of identity negotiation. These studies also revealed that immigrants’ ethnic names have a “double-sided effect” (Hatano & Miyake, 1991, p. 279) in that the ethnic names provide them with membership in their ethnic community while constraining membership in the mainstream community.
The relationship between naming practices and one’s sense of self is aligned with the perspective that the self is socially constructed (MaLaughlin & Heath, 1993; Miller & Mangelsdorf, 2005; Varenne & McDermott, 1999; Walsh, 2002). In this sense, the use of different names to address a single child in different contexts can critically influence his or her developing sense of who he or she is. However, researchers have paid little attention to how young children in general, and young immigrant children in particular, participate in these cultural practices and what these practices mean to them. In what follows, I present my findings concerning the relation between young Korean-American children’s naming practices and their developing sense of self.

Most children in this study demonstrated that their sense of self was linked to their names to different degrees. I tried to understand the children’s sense of self by carefully examining the names they used for themselves and the names that others called them. Seonil’s case described below is a good example of how a child followed adults’ naming practices and how these practices influenced his self-representation. In Seonil’s case, the adults, including his caregivers, teachers, and other parishioners, addressed him as Seonil more than Steve, although his peers called him both Seonil and Steve. Seonil also had a more distinctive sense of self in relation to his names than other participant children did.

Field notes: 02/17/2008

When I ask about his name, Seonil says, “In Korean, Seonil is Seonil. In English it is Steve.” I ask him again, “Are Seonil and Steve the same person?” He answers, “Yes.” I probe further, “Which name do you prefer to be called?” He replies, “Seonil and Steve.” Through interviews with his mother, I also found that she had a clearer idea about who she wanted Seonil to be as a Korean-American than other caregivers did. The following
transcript shows how a caregiver’s beliefs and values were reflected in her naming practice for her child, and how this practice influenced her child’s self-representation.

Interview transcripts: 02/19/2008

At an American school, he is just Steve without Seonil. But in other places, he introduces himself as “Seonil and Steve”. . . He is neither a Korean nor an American because he is in between . . . so I clearly and always say to him, “You’re in the middle.” . . . I always tell him that he is a Korean American . . . So, we say to him, we always call him, “Seonil and Steve.” Seonil first comes and then Steve follows.

Seonil’s mother had a clear perspective of her son’s identity as a Korean American and wanted to communicate her idea through her naming practice for her son. The perspective of his mother persuaded Seonil to have one foot in each culture; thus, he represented himself as “Seonil and Steve.”

As discussed earlier, the caregivers’ religion was often reflected in their child’s English name. Therefore, for the participant children of this study, religion was another factor influencing their sense of self. For example, Seonil also represented himself as Emanuel, his baptismal name, in the heritage language class, although his teachers and peers rarely called him by his baptismal name. One day when the teacher asked the children about their names, Seonil mentioned that he had three different names.

Field notes: 03/02/2008

Seonil: (raising and shaking his hands) I have no two. I have three names.

Jinhee: What are the three [names]?

Seonil: I have three names (showing his fingers).

Teacher: Then what is one of them? Number one is . . .
Seonil: Number one is Steve, Seonil, and Emanuel.

Thus, Seonil’s case shows how a child can learn and develop the sense of who he is by being addressed differently by different people and by internalizing these naming practices because self can be conceptualized in relationships with others (Miller & Mangelsdorf, 2005).

Unlike Seonil, other children did not demonstrate distinctive self-representation. Instead, these other children showed that they were sensitive to who they were in relation to their different names as used in different contexts. That is, the children were aware of their situatedness in bicultural and bilingual contexts and of how their different names reflected their different positions in those contexts. This awareness may well affect their developing sense of multiple identities, particularly their situated selves. Myungwoo showed his awareness of Seonil’s situatedness by interrupting the conversation between Seonil and me. In the following transcript, Myungwoo revealed his understanding of how language and contexts influenced how his peer was (and should be) addressed by others.

Field notes/Audio transcripts: 09/07/2008

Today is the first class of Fall 2008. Seonil, Myungwoo, and Joohee are doing their worksheets at the table. I approach Seonil and ask him a question similar to the one I asked in January, 2008.

Jinhee: Seonil, what name do you want your friends to call you? Seonil? Steve?
Seonil: (after a few seconds) Well, English [name] at school, I have a Korean name [in the Korean language school].
Jinhee: Then how do your friends call you?
Seonil: Seonil.
Jinhee: Do you want your American friends to call you that?
Seonil: … (silence)

Myungwoo: (interrupting our conversation) American friends call him Steve.

Jinhee: (to Myungwoo) Why?

Myungwoo: Because they speak in English.

When I asked Seonil a similar question on January 17, 2008, he immediately responded to me that he should be addressed as “Seonil and Steve.” However, when I asked him in September, 2008 whether he wanted to be called Seonil by American friends, he did not answer my question. Myungwoo, however, chimed in to share that American children should call Seonil by his English name, Steve, because of their language.

This awareness was also shown in Joohee’s case. Like Seonil and Myungwoo, Joohee also recognized the relation between her different names and bilingual/bicultural contexts.

Field notes: 09/21/2008

The children finish their worksheets, and the teacher asks the children to follow a song. I approach Joohee to ask questions about her name.

Jinhee: Joohee, what does your school teacher call you?

Joohee (Michelle): (misunderstanding my question) There are Ms. Lindsey and Ms. Katie.

Jinhee: How do the teachers call you? Joohee? Or Michelle?

Joohee (Michelle): Michelle.

Jinhee: (pointing at other children in the classroom) Then, how do these friends call you?

Joohee? Or Michelle?

Joohee (Michelle): Joohee.

Jinhee: Why do they call you like that?
Joohee (Michelle): *Because these friends can’t speak English. So, they call me Joohee.*

The adults and peers in the heritage language school primarily addressed Joohee as her Korean name. Even though she was addressed differently by different family members at home as described earlier, Joohee firmly represented herself with her Korean name in the heritage language class, and her peers respected her preference. For example, one day, after the other children began to talk about their names, she came to me and said, “*I’m M.I. C.H.E. [L.L.E. in English] and Korean name is Joohee.*” (Field notes, 11/18/2007). Joohee used her Korean name when she interacted with other children. Whenever she wanted to join an activity, she always said, “Joohee wants” or “Joohee will do.” Joohee’s self-representation in the classroom might have strongly influenced naming practices among her peers because they never called her Michelle. Joohee referred to herself with her Korean name even when she acted as a mom during a dramatic play, as shown the following field notes.

**Field notes: 03/16/2008**

For a while Eunjoo18 and Joohee are talking to each other on the carpet in front of the bathroom. Then, Joohee plays alone near Myungwoo. A few minutes later, Eunjoo goes to the bathroom and comes out of it, saying to Joohee, “Mommy. I got this. I got this” (bringing a piece of toilet paper). Joohee replies to Eunjoo, “I’m Joohee. I’m Joohee.”

The interview and observation data revealed that Joohee was keenly aware of the need to represent herself differently in different contexts by using her different names.

In addition to claiming particular names in particular contexts, children represented who they are through writing. As Bloodgood (1999) reported, because children’s name writing often becomes the first step of exploring their written language, writing their names can be an avenue

18 Eunjoo was a non-participant girl in the classroom.
for self-representation. The children in this study tended to represent their written names with English letters rather than Korean characters on worksheets, although few children were able to write their full names in English, and most could only scribble some English letters as part of their names. Although their writing ability varied, it was clear that the children, called by different names in different contexts, experienced another dissonance between their spoken and written names. The teachers often provided the children with worksheets on which they wrote the children’s Korean names or wrote the children’s Korean names after they finished their work, as illustrated in the following field notes.

Field notes: 03/02/2008

When Jessica finishes her worksheet, she goes to the teacher. The lead teacher, Miss Cho, is about to write Jessica’s name on her worksheet. Jessica says to Miss Cho,

Jessica: Jessi…Joo[hee]…wait, wait, wait! Jess ica. I don’t know how to spell it. (after a few seconds) No. No. Sophia.

Teacher: OK. I put all your names.

Jessica was one child who always wrote her English name on her worksheets because she could not write Korean characters well.19 This transcript reveals that Jessica was aware of herself as Joohee (Korean name), Jessica (English name), and Sophia (baptismal name), even though she frequently represented herself as Jessica in verbal language. When she asked the teachers to help write her names on her worksheets, she sometimes asked them to make dots, which allowed her to write her names herself. One week after the incident described above, the teacher wrote Jessica’s Korean, English, and baptismal names on a worksheet, saying, “Here. Joohee-Jessica-Sophia” (Field notes, 03/09/2008). For Jessica, the experiences with three different names might

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19 However, Jessica was able to read her written Korean name.
have influenced her to explore and develop her sense of self. By representing herself through speaking and writing her names, Jessica was constantly engaged in developing her sense of self. This echoes the existing studies that show how multiple names influence identity (e.g., Aceto, 2002) and the negotiation process of identity (e.g., Kim, 2007; Thompson, 2006).

Like Jessica, some children expressed their preferred names when the teachers wrote them. For example, when Soojung finished her worksheet, she went to the assistant teacher, Miss Jang, to get help with writing her name. Soojung firmly said to Miss Jang, “My name is Marianna.” The assistant teacher wrote her English name, Marianna, instead of Soojung (field notes, 03/02/2008). However, there was some inconsistency between her spoken name and her written name. Before she did her worksheet, the lead teacher, Miss Cho, asked her, “Soojung, by which name do I call you? Marianna or Soojung?” (Field notes, 03/02/2008). Soojung replied that she preferred both names. This dissonance between the spoken name and the written name reflects how she as a young child continuously explored and negotiated her sense of self in a given context.

In this section, I tried to unpack the implicit and complex contexts in which the children were situated in relation to naming practices. By representing themselves differently within different contexts, the children revealed their awareness of their different positions in each context. The children also understood that they needed to adjust their selves according to those contexts. Through the use of their different names, this adjustment and readjustment to bilingual/bicultural contexts and the changes in their self-representation in these contexts seemed to encourage these Korean-American children to develop and explore multiple situated selves.
Children derive their socio-cultural knowledge, values, and beliefs from the adult world, but they understand these through their own perspectives as shaped by themselves and by and with their peers (Corsaro, 1985, 1992, 1997). In this sense, by focusing on young children’s agency, as advocated by many researchers (Corsaro, 1992, 1997; Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Corsaro et al., 2003; Corsaro & Rosier, 1992; Gaskins et al., 1992; Shewder et al., 1998), I claim that children internalize adult naming practices, try to make sense of those practices according to their own shared meanings, and recreate naming practices with their peers. In particular, looking closely at how children internalize adults’ naming practices and make sense of those practices from the children’s perspectives is very important, because it may reveal what children’s naming practices in their peer relations and interactions signal and what socio-cultural knowledge accompanies their practices.

Internalizing Adults’ Naming Practices in Peer Relations

Data revealed some regular patterns of naming practices by adults and by children. Not surprisingly, most children tended to address their peers using the same names that adults (e.g., caregivers, teachers, and other adults) did. If adults called a child a Korean name, for example, his or her peers tended to use the Korean name. If adults used both Korean and English names to refer to a child, the child’s peers also tended to call him or her by both names. Before discussing the children’s naming practices in peer relations in detail, I first introduce what the adults’ naming practices looked like in the heritage language class as contextual information.

Caregivers

Caregivers called their children by different names at the heritage language school. Some caregivers mainly called their child (e.g., Kyuwon, Junsung, Jessica, Soojung) by his or her
English name. Some primarily used their child’s Korean name (e.g., Boyong, Joohee, Yongjae, Wonkyu). Others called their child (e.g., Hyonmin, Myungwoo, Seonil) by both English and Korean names (see Table 5.2).

**Teachers**

I observed that the teachers tended to follow all the caregivers’ naming patterns without question. When I asked the teachers why they called the children by certain names, the teachers answered that they just followed the caregivers’ preference. Mrs. Lee, the lead teacher in religious education class, also agreed with this pattern, saying, “*Whatever the mothers call them, I call the children. If Hyonmin’s mother calls him Hyonmin, I naturally call him Hyonmin*” (Interview, 03/22/2008).

On February 17, 2008, I asked the teachers in the heritage language class about their naming practices with the students. I provided them with a list of the children’s English and Korean names, asking, “Which name is more familiar to you?” The lead and assistant teachers gave me slightly different answers (see Table 5.2), but, for the most part, they followed the caregivers’ naming practices.

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20 Each teacher’s level of proficiency in either Korean or English seems to affect her naming choices. Miss Jang felt more comfortable speaking in English than in Korean; therefore, she tended to use the children’s English names more often than Miss Cho did.
Table 5.2
The Teachers’ and Caregivers’ Tendency for the Children’s Names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Lead Teacher (Miss Cho)</th>
<th>Assistant Teacher (Miss Jang)</th>
<th>Caregiver (at the heritage language school)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyuwon (Eric) Oh</td>
<td>Kyuwon</td>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>Eric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyonmin (Simon) Cho</td>
<td>Hyonmin</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Hyonmin/Simon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seonil (Steve) Jang</td>
<td>Seonil</td>
<td>Seonil</td>
<td>Seonil/Steve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myungwoo (Peter) Shon</td>
<td>Myungwoo</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Myungwoo/Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junsung (Paul) Park</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongjae (Jacob) Choi</td>
<td>Yongjae</td>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Yongjae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soojung (Marianna) Kim</td>
<td>Soojung</td>
<td>Marianna</td>
<td>Marianna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joohee (Michelle) Lee</td>
<td>Joohee</td>
<td>Joohee</td>
<td>Joohee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica (Joohee) Lee</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyong (Emily) Min</td>
<td>Boyong, Emily</td>
<td>Boyong</td>
<td>Boyong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonkyu (Mike) Min</td>
<td>Wonkyu</td>
<td>Not familiar with both names</td>
<td>Wonkyu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, they responded that they felt more familiar with some children’s Korean names (e.g., Yongjae, Joohee, Boyong), and these children’s caregivers tended to use their child’s Korean name. The teachers also felt more familiar with some other children’s English names (e.g., Jessica, Paul) because these children’s caregivers frequently used English names.

Other caregivers
Like the teachers, the other caregivers also tended to reflect a caregiver’s designation for his or her child. For example, Junsung’s mother called her son Paul at the heritage language school, and the other caregivers followed suit, calling him Paul and addressing his mother as Paul’s mother instead of Junsung’s mother.
Interestingly, the participants’ initials I had recorded in my field notes were almost identical with the naming patterns of the caregivers and the teachers. I was not aware of this until I began analyzing data by focusing on naming practices. Since the beginning of this study, I had used initials of participants’ names in my field notes to record who did what. When reflecting on the moments that I recorded in my field notes, I realized how I unconsciously wrote down the initials of participants based on what I heard from the adults. In my notes, I used two categories to refer to each child. In the first category, I recorded the first letter of each syllable of their Korean names, while in the second, I abbreviated their English names. For example, Joohee was recorded as “JH” for her Korean name and “MI” for her English name, Michelle. Over time, I had identified Joohee as “JH” rather than as “MI” because I heard her Korean name more frequently than her English name in the classroom. As another example, I identified Junsung as PL, for his English name (Paul) because he was generally addressed as Paul.

Children

The children generally followed the adults’ naming patterns when they spoke with their peers. For example, Joohee’s mother used Joohee’s Korean name both at home and at the heritage language school. The teachers never called Joohee by her English name, and they also mentioned during the interview with me that her Korean name was more familiar to them. Interestingly, throughout the school year none of her peers in the heritage school ever mentioned Joohee’s English name, Michelle. Instead, Joohee was only addressed by her Korean name. She was called Joohee even by Jessica, who had the same Korean name as Joohee and limited proficiency in Korean. Joohee represented herself by her Korean name in the third person when
interacting with other children in the classroom. As described earlier, whenever she wanted to join an activity, she always said, “Joohee wants” or “Joohee will do.”

Unlike Joohee (Michelle), Jessica was never addressed by her Korean name among her peers. Although the adults in the heritage school usually called her Jessica, there were a few moments when they used her Korean name. Those situations included when the teachers called the class roll and when her grandmother told her Korean name to others at the school. At times the teachers called her Joohee in front of other children. I also observed that at some moments Jessica represented herself by both her Korean and English names, including her baptismal name, to her peers. Through these incidents, the other children could have recognized that Jessica’s Korean name was Joohee. However, Jessica’s Korean name was never mentioned in the children’s peer relations, except for a situation when some children playfully mimicked what their teacher said, as described below:

Field notes/Audio-recording transcripts: 04/13/2008

While the other children are doing individual coloring worksheets, Joohee (Michelle) comes to the classroom late with her mother.

Miss Cho: (guiding Joohee to her seat) Joohee goes there.

Seonil: (mimicking the teacher’s voice) Lalala. Joohee is, stupid Joohee.

Jessica: (in a tone indicating how she is upset) “Stupid Joohee” is a bad word!

Miss Cho: Yeah!

Jessica: (after a few seconds, to the teacher) He said stupid to me!

Seonil & Hyonmin: (looking at each other and laughing) Stupid Joohee!

Miss Cho: No. Don’t say that. That’s mean.

Jessica: If you keep saying, I’m stupid. I’ll [unintelligible].

Miss Cho: Super Joohee. That’s what you said?

Seonil: Yes.

Jessica: I don’t want to be super Joohee. Just want to be myself.

Miss Cho: OK. Just Jessica-Joohee.

Seonil: That’s, that’s, that’s just super Joohee.

Jessica: (not paying attention to Seonil, saying to herself) I can.

Miss Cho: OK. You can write your name.

Jessica: (to Joohee) I can help [you]. We can do it together.

Miss Cho: Your name…

Jessica: (to Joohee) We can do with black and green things, if we want. (Jessica writes her English first name on the corner of her worksheet, letting Joohee write her last name)

Miss Cho: OK. (Pointing at Joohee) Her name is Joohee, too.

Except for this moment, the children used Jessica’s English name throughout my study, as the adults, including teachers and parishioners at the church, called her Jessica.

As another example, Myungwoo’s mother called her son by both his names (Myungwoo and Peter) at a similar rate at the heritage language school. Similarly, the teachers followed the caregiver’s pattern of using both names in the classroom, although there was a minor difference between the two teachers. The lead teacher, Miss Cho, used the Korean name, Myungwoo, more often than Miss Jang, the assistant teacher, did. Myungwoo himself did not represent himself by using one of his names exclusively. Instead, he answered with both names whenever adults, including me, asked his name. The children, too, followed the patterns of adults’ naming practices, addressing him as both names. Adopting the adult naming practices, Myungwoo’s two
names were used in his peer relations at a similar rate. Interestingly, however, except for Hyonmin, some children tended to use only Myungwoo’s English name, while others tended to use only his Korean name in their interactions with him. The reason why some of their peers preferred to use one name over the other seemed to be related to the children’s shared knowledge and norms in peer interactions, a topic I will discuss in detail in the next section.

Negotiating Adults’ Naming Practices in Peer Relations

Clearly, adults’ naming practices influenced the children’s naming practices in peer relations, as in the previous section. However, the children in this study did not passively follow adults’ practices all the time. Instead, the children negotiated adults’ practices and constructed their own naming practices based on their shared understandings and norms with peers. I will now describe what norms the children shared in relation to naming practices and how the naming practices influenced peer relations.

First, children’s naming practices reflected their sensitivity to differences in their peers’ language use and language proficiency. For example, the children responded to Jessica and Joohee (Michelle) differently based on their language use and language proficiency. As noted earlier, the children never used Jessica’s Korean name or Joohee’s (Michelle) English name, although they had the same Korean name with each other. The children could have used Jessica’s Korean name, Joohee, because they had opportunities to hear her Korean names in the classroom. Occasionally, the teachers also called Jessica by her Korean name in front of her peers. At times, Jessica introduced herself to her peers by using both her Korean and English names, although adults, including teachers and parishioners at the church, called her Jessica most of the time.
The children’s different references to the two girls revealed their sensitivity to their peers’ proficiency in different languages. Similar to this finding, Maybin (2005) argued: “Children [are] highly sensitive to context, and varied their language use accordingly . . . children presented themselves and negotiated relationships with others through talk” (p. 18).

Joohee (Michelle) was more fluent in Korean and tended to use a mixed language of Korean and English. In comparison, Jessica spoke mostly English, with the exception of a few Korean words such as “teacher.” The children tended to talk to Joohee in Korean, while interacting with Jessica in English. I also noticed that the adults, including the teachers and myself, tended to speak Korean with Joohee (Michelle), while speaking English with Jessica. The children’s awareness of these different interaction patterns and different languages used in the interactions seemed to influence their naming practices.

Soojung’s case is another example of how children’s naming practices reflect their sensitivity to their peers’ language proficiency. Although the teachers called Soojung by both her Korean and English names at a similar rate, her peers addressed her as Marianna, choosing to use her English name. Similarly, at the Korean heritage school, Soojung’s mother also used Soojung’s English name rather than her Korean name. Soojung was able to “understand about 70 percent of what others say in Korean” (Interview with Soojung’s mother, 02/10/2008), but had difficulty expressing her thoughts in Korean. Soojung knew more Korean words than Jessica did. During my interview with her mother, Soojung waited, wandering in and out of the classroom. She sometimes interrupted the interview, saying few Korean phrases such as “Let’s go home” and “One, two, three.” Even when her mother talked to her in Korean, she answered in English, as she did to the teachers. I never observed her interacting with her peers in Korean.
Although the teachers addressed her with both names in the classroom, her language proficiency seemed to greatly influence her peers’ preference for her English name in their relationships.

In addition, the children’s distinction between Jessica and Joohee (Michelle) seemed to reveal their sensitivity to their peers’ physical appearance. Although Jessica had black hair and black eyes, just like many Asian children, as a biracial child her face had subtly different features that distinguished her from other children whose parents were both Asians. As Nesdale, Durkin, Maass, and Griffiths (2004) noted, even very young children can “differentiate among people based on physical cues (e.g. skin color)” (p. 238); thus, I suspect that her physical appearance might have influenced her peers’ perception about her and their naming practices for her.

To summarize, the children built shared understandings and norms with their peers according to their sensitivity to different language proficiency levels and physical appearances. Although their naming practices were influenced by the adults’ naming practices, the shared understandings and norms in their peer relations clearly influenced the children’s naming practices in peer culture. Children’s naming practices, therefore, were a critical source for understanding how children built their cultural and situational knowledge with peers.

Second, the children’s naming practices also reflected their relationships with their peers. A careful examination of who called who what reveals patterns of children’s relations with particular peers. As discussed in Chapter 2, several researchers (e.g., Feng et al., 2004; Meyer et al., 1994) found how a shared language contributed to inclusion and exclusion in children’s peer relations. Similarly, the children in this study showed the power of a shared language in their peer relations in the heritage language class. As mentioned in the previous section, the children’s naming practices reflected their and their peers’ language proficiency in either Korean or
English. This language proficiency also influenced the creation of the children’s shared knowledge and norms and the formation of their peer relations.

As discussed earlier, many of the other children tended to refer to Myungwoo by either his English name or his Korean name. Interestingly, certain children used one name consistently while others used the other. Hyonmin, Junsung, and Seonil called Myungwoo by his Korean name. The four boys (Hyonmin, Myungwoo, Seonil, and Junsung), as core group members, frequently played and interacted with each other. Even Junsung, who had difficulty pronouncing his own Korean name, used the boys’ Korean names with their English names. Except for these three boys (Hyonmin, Seonil, and Myungwoo), Junsung never used other children’s Korean names when he referred to them. In addition, I observed that Jessica used Myungwoo’s English name only twice throughout the school year. In the first instance, Myungwoo came to the classroom wearing a deer shaped hair band prompting Jessica to shout, “Hey, Peter” (Field notes, 12/16/2007). In the second, Myungwoo picked up too many crayons and Jessica scolded him saying, “Peter, No. No. Oh my god. Teacher! Teacher! He takes all of it” (Field notes, 01/13/2008). Except for Hyonmin, Junsung, Seonil, and Jessica, the others rarely interacted with him or called his name.

Hyonmin is another example of how the children’s shared knowledge and norms reveal their relations through their naming practices. The teachers frequently called Hyonmin by his Korean name, but only certain children addressed him as Hyonmin. The children using Hyonmin’s Korean name were limited to Junsung, Seonil, and Myungwoo. Hyonmin sometimes played with Jessica and Kyuwon, who rarely spoke Korean, and they called him by his English name. Hyonmin tended to speak to his peers in a mixture of Korean and English, although his
English was not grammatically correct. Except for these children, Hyonmin rarely interacted with the others, and the other children never addressed him by his Korean or English name.

Similar to how the children designated Myungwoo and Hyonmin, Seonil was referred to by either his Korean or English name. Seonil, who was fluent in both languages, tended to be referred to by his Korean name by the three boys (Hyonmin, Myungwoo, and Junsung) but not by other children.

As shown in the examples above, those who called Hyonmin, Myungwoo, and Seonil by their Korean names mainly used the Korean language when interacting with others. The children who mainly interacted with peers in English never addressed the boys with their Korean names. Except for Jessica,\(^{21}\) Hyonmin and Myungwoo more frequently interacted with peers who spoke Korean, or at least a mix of Korean and English, than with those speaking English.

In addition, examining who frequently called whom what and how each child was addressed provides a window into the children’s peer relations. Unlike Hyonmin and Myungwoo, Yongjae interacted with his peers in English. The teachers more frequently called him Yongjae than Jacob. Kyuwon, Jessica, and Soojung, who had very limited proficiency in Korean, addressed Yongjae as Jacob. I observed only one time when Yongjae was addressed by his Korean name by Seonil, a fluent Korean speaker. In that incident, Seonil called Yongjae’s Korean name only to mimic the teacher’s utterances, as he did with Jessica’s Korean name, as described earlier. Other children never called Yongjae by either name during the entire year. I noticed that Yongjae was often a “bystander” during free play. He frequently watched others, playing carefully nearby other children, rather than actively participating. When he more or less participated in the play, Kyuwon or/and Jessica were always involved. Like the examples of

\(^{21}\) Jessica frequently became a gatekeeper for gaining entry in interactions. For more details, see Chapter 6.
Myungwoo, Hyonmin, and Seonil, what name Yongjae was called by his peers and who used his names signal how the children’s peer relations are linked to language use and proficiency.

Similar to Yongjae, the teachers more frequently called Kyuwon by his Korean name. However, none of his peers used his Korean name, instead choosing to call him by his English name, Eric. Considering the fact that Kyuwon’s father and grandmother mainly called him Eric, this was a notable case where the teachers did not follow the caregivers’ naming practices. Regardless of the differences between the teachers and caregivers, the children called him Eric, perhaps due to his frequent use of English in his interactions with peers. The children who called him Eric were Jessica, Yongjae, and some non-participant children. These were the children with whom Kyuwon frequently interacted.

Thus, children’s naming practices provided information about individual children’s peer relations, such as who often interacted with whom and what language they used with their peers. Like naming practices, the children’s peer groups tended to reflect their language proficiency: children with limited proficiency in Korean (e.g., Yongjae, Kyuwon, and Jessica) interacted among themselves, while children speaking a mix of Korean and English (e.g., Seonil, Hyonmin, and Joohee) created their own peer group.

In particular, those children who fluently spoke both languages were more often addressed by their peers than others. This is perhaps due to their capability of building broader peer relations than their peers who had limited proficiency in one of the languages. Seonil, for example, spoke both languages very well, and all but three children—Boyong, Wonkyu, and Soojung22—interacted with him by calling him by either his Korean or English name.

22 Soojung, who had limited proficiency with Korean, rarely interacted with Seonil, although Seonil was fluent in both languages. More details are given in Chapter 6.
Considering the fact that Boyong and Wonkyu rarely interacted with other children, Seonil was, in fact, addressed by almost all children in the heritage language class. I observed that Seonil often was a leader in the Korean-speaking children’s play. Because of his fluency in both languages, he easily accessed and participated in both groups that mainly spoke English or Korean (see Table 5.3). Those who called Seonil by his English name were Yongjae, Jessica, and Kyuwon, and these children felt comfortable speaking English in their peer interactions. Those children who called Seonil by his Korean name were Joohee, Myungwoo, and Hyonmin; each of these children spoke either Korean or a mix of Korean and English when interacting with peers. Only Junsung, one of those who interacted with peers in English, called Seonil by both names. Similarly, all of the children referred to Jessica by her English name except for Boyong and Wonkyu, who never initiated interaction with any of the other children. I noticed that Jessica often became a leader of the children’s play group that spoke English.

The following table describes the frequency of name use by peers:
Table 5.3

*Frequency of Name Use by Peers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Korean Name</th>
<th>English Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyonmin (Simon) Cho</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongjae (Jacob) Choi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seonil (Steve) Jang</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soojung (Marianna) Kim</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joohee (Jessica) Lee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joohee (Michelle) Lee</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyong (Emily) Min</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonkyu (Mike) Min</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyuwon (Eric) Oh</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junsung (Paul) Park</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myungwoo (Peter) Shon</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, a careful examination of the children’s naming practices also helped identify those children who “are not consistently rejected, but . . . fail to become active participants in peer culture” (Corsaro, 1997, p. 157). I found that those children who were rarely addressed by their peers, regardless of their Korean or English names, had few chances to interact with others (see Table 5.3). Boyong and Wonkyu, as siblings, stayed close to each other and built a strong dyad, interacting and playing only with each other. Interestingly, the children’s naming practices with these siblings were similar to the teachers’ naming practices, as the teachers rarely called
these siblings’ names at all. Forming their own dyad, these siblings were neglected in their relationships with peers and teachers. In contrast, Jessica was the child the teachers addressed most often in the classroom. Jessica was also very popular among the children and was frequently addressed by her peers. These cases reveal how the frequency of a child’s name use by other children in the classroom was related to the degree of attention, whether negative or positive, he or she received from peers and teachers.

In summary, this chapter has clearly shown that the caregivers’ naming practices reflect their cultural values and beliefs as well as their desires for their children to fully adjust to the host society. The children were also situated in different contexts with different names. With the contextual information given, this chapter has revealed that the Korean-American children share and negotiate their social knowledge with peers by adopting cultural practices and values from the adult world through naming practices. The children’s naming practices serve as a salient tool for understanding children’s peer culture. Internalizing adults’ naming practices, children explored and developed a sense of self, asserted independence by sometimes addressing their peers in a manner different from the adults, and constructed their peer relations according to their shared norms. In other words, this chapter has demonstrated that children’s naming practices can be a significant tool for understanding how children negotiate their shared norms, such as language use and proficiency and subtly different physical appearances, with peers. In particular, differing language use and language proficiency among peers are interwoven with how the children address their peers with different names and who interacts with whom, and how. At the same time, children’s naming practices in this study reveal how a child forms peer relations and which children gather with each other in core groups.
CHAPTER 6
CHILDREN’S NEGOTIATIONS IN PEER RELATIONS

Field notes: 01/13/2008

In the pre-kindergarten religious education class, Mrs. Lee is distributing materials to each child so that he or she can make a biscuit house. Kyuwon and Junsung sit next to each other at the table. Jessica sits in front of the two boys and next to Minsoo.23 The children are waiting for their materials.

Jessica: (to Kyuwon) Are you my friend now?

Kyuwon: (hesitating) But I still don’t know.

Jessica: I can’t . . . [unintelligible] any more (with a paper, touching Kyuwon)

Kyuwon: (to Jessica) Why’re you asking me?

Jessica: I just . . . [unintelligible]

Minsoo: (interrupting the conversation) Jessica, Jessica.

Jessica: (to Minsoo) I’m here.

Minsoo: OK.

Jessica: OK. (pointing at Minsoo and saying to Kyuwon) This is my friend. (turning her body toward Minsoo) Don’t be his [Kyuwon’s] friend. Just be my friend, OK?

Minsoo: OK.

23 Minsoo was a non-participant boy, and he only attended the religious education class.
Jessica began to actively interact with Kyuwon in December 2007. Before they entered the religious education classroom, Jessica, Kyuwon, and Junsung had sneakily shared Game Boys,\textsuperscript{24} which Jessica and Kyuwon brought from home, in the play house during free-play time while avoiding the attention of other children and the teachers in the heritage language class.\textsuperscript{25} The children knew that the teachers did not allow toys to be brought into the classroom; nonetheless, they often tried to bring them in and share them with their peers clandestinely. This behavior shows the children’s secondary adjustments, as described by Corsaro (1985, 1997), through which children control their lives collaboratively by resisting adult authority. On the day described in the field notes presented above, Jessica and Kyuwon played with Game Boys in the play house, and Junsung gained entry to watch them. After they moved to the religious education classroom on that same day, Jessica and Kyuwon continued to build their relationship by sitting near each other and confirming their friendship. The time adverbs used by Jessica (”now”) and Kyuwon (”still”) show that they were in the process of making and being friends. The bonds they forged at play in the heritage language classroom earlier continued later in the religious education classroom. Thus, as shown above, Jessica tried to confirm the friendships based on her shared experience with Kyuwon twenty minutes earlier. Jessica’s use of the term “friend” signifies her desire to build solidarity with Kyuwon and her concern about “doing things together” (Corsaro, 1997, p. 123). However, because Kyuwon was hesitant to give his answer

\textsuperscript{24} Game Boys are handheld video games made by a Japanese company (Nintendo) and are very popular among young children.

\textsuperscript{25} During the research period, the children often brought their personal toys such as mini-cars, Thomas trains, Pokemon cards, or Game Boys.
right away (i.e., “still don’t know”), Jessica “marked competition” (Cosraso, 1985, p. 164) by targeting Kyuwon through her alliance with Minsoo.

As in the example of Jessica and Kyuwon given above, the children in this study both socialized their peers and were socialized by them through their reference to the term, “friend.” In this chapter, I extend my analysis from Chapter 5 by introducing children’s grouping structures in peer relations. To this end, I focus on children’s friendship processes rather than their friendship outcomes in order to describe both how the children presented their agency as a means to “gain control of their lives and to share that control with each other” (Corsaro & Eder, 1990, p. 202) and how their interactions reflected the local and larger cultural contexts in which they were situated. Specifically, looking closely at the children’s friendship processes, I examine how the children use their code word for affiliation “friend” to initiate and cultivate friendships. Thus, this chapter attempts to illuminate areas where the children exercise their own agency so as to facilitate an understanding of how children negotiate conflicts among peers in their peer culture.

**Group Structure in Children’s Relations**

Although the children in the study did not meet each other daily, they nonetheless maintained their own peer groups. Members of these groups frequently interacted and played with each other. In this study, different language use among peers was the most powerful boundary to the children’s construction of core groups. As noted in Chapter 5, the children were divided into two groups based on language proficiency and use: One group with limited language proficiency in Korean (therefore communicating mainly in English) and the other group with a proficiency in both Korean and English (therefore communicating in a mix of the two languages):
Table 6

*Group Structure Based on Language Proficiency and Use*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Boundaries</th>
<th>Names of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited language proficiency in Korean</td>
<td>Jessica (4, Girl), Kyuwon (4, Boy), Soojung (4, Girl), and Yongjae (4, Boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency in Korean (at least a mix of both languages)</td>
<td>Seonil (3, Boy), Hyonmin (4, Boy), Myungwoo (3, Boy), Junsung (4, Boy), Joohee (Michelle, 3, Girl), Boyong (4, Girl), and Wonkyu (2 and ½, Boy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Corsaro (1997) stated that children tend to have broad peer relations “to maximize the probability of successful entry and satisfying peer interaction” (p. 126), the children in this study showed strong allegiance to the core groups. Members in each group tended to interact with each other within their language boundaries. Thus, in these groups language played the most significant role in shaping and maintaining group structure. Before discussing the core peer groups further, I need to note two special cases. First, although Boyong and Wonkyu were affiliated with the group that used a mix of Korean and English in conversation, they generally only played with each other and rarely interacted with others throughout the year, as noted in Chapter 5. Second, even though Junsung had limited proficiency in Korean, he tended to play in the group that used a mix of Korean and English. His bond with this group may have resulted from the influence of his caregiver, who sometimes set up play dates for him with Seonil and Myungwoo.

The children constructed their core groups based on language proficiency and language use among peers, and tended to maintain the group boundaries. Researchers have shown that gender (e.g., Keddie, 2003; Thorne, 1986; Ting, 1995) and age (e.g., Best, 1983) are salient
elements affecting children’s peer culture. Other researchers (e.g., Feng et al., 2004; Meyer et al., 1994) have demonstrated that language is a powerful factor for children in building their peer groups. Despite the difference in age between the child participants (between three and four years old) in this study, age did not seem to influence the children’s core groups significantly. Gender did not influence the children’s group structure, either (see Table 6). Instead, the children interacted with each other based on their language proficiency and use. As noted earlier, this tendency was also salient in the analysis of children’s naming practices (see Chapter 5). The following Figure 6 also describes how the children’s groups were constructed according to their language proficiency and use and how they relate to naming practices. The children in double-lined circle spoke to each other in English, while the children in single-lined circles spoke a mix of English and Korean. The bold-lined children were the most fluent in the language of their group. The children in dotted-lined circles rarely interacted with others but spoke to each other in a mix of English and Korean. The lines between circles show that children referred to each other. The cases were not included if the relationship was unidirectional (i.e., A child was addressed by his or her peer, but did not respond).

Interestingly, each group had gatekeepers (the bold-lined children in Figure 6) who exhibited advanced fluency in at least one language. In the group with limited proficiency in Korean, Jessica tended to be a gatekeeper for children’s interactions, particularly during play. She frequently interacted with Seonil, who spoke both languages fluently. Considering Jessica’s language use at home (her father had limited Korean proficiency and communicated with her only in English), Jessica was the most fluent English speaker among the children. In the group that used a mix of Korean and English, Seonil tended to be the gatekeeper for the group because he was the most fluent in both languages.
Thus, the common characteristic of the two gatekeepers was their advanced language proficiency in comparison with their other group members. In addition, the two gatekeepers often crossed group boundaries to interact with each other, whereas the other children rarely interrelated with children outside their own group. These findings echo Feng et al.’s (2004) study. They found that Chinese girls fluent in both languages served as gatekeepers to protect their interactive spaces from others. They found that language is the key to gaining entry into groups in a multilingual setting. Similarly, in this study, different language use and language proficiency among peers strongly influenced the children’s peer group structure.

**Children’s Use of Friendship**

Although the children constructed their own groups based on language, their interactions were also fragile interludes, as Corsaro (1985) noted, where “termination could occur without warning at any time, and the predominate mode of leave-taking (simple physical movement from...
a play area) most often precluded any possible negotiation to continue the activity” (p. 126). As shown in the episode described at the beginning of this chapter, for young children, being a friend tends to mean doing something together “in the moment” (Corsaro, 2003, p. 69). Corsaro (1997) also argued that children tend to protect their interactive space in which they attempt to “keep sharing what they are already sharing and see others as a threat” (p. 24). This often culminates in conflict or in resistance to access by other non-participatory peers.

Along these same lines, Corsaro (1985) also reported that children’s references to friendship can be used “as a device for gaining entry and social participation” (e.g., Can I be your friend?) as well as a “basis for exclusion” (e.g., You are not my friend now) (p. 124). He also noted that children used references to friendship to build solidarity through competitive remarks (e.g., We are not her friend, right?) and to attempt social control over other children (e.g., I’ll be your friend if you do something).

As in Corsaro’s own findings, the children in this study spontaneously referred to friendship many times. Throughout the study, a total of 89 references to friendship were coded through data analysis. The coded data only included the children’s utterances that contained the exact word, “friend.” Of the 89 references to friendship, 56 arose from attempts to access groups or ongoing activities. These 56 references were uttered both by those who wanted to be included and by those trying to protect their activity through exclusion (e.g., “Only my friends [come]!” Field notes, Jessica’s utterance, 02/24/2008). Of the remaining references, 19 were used to build solidarity (e.g., “Do you want to be my friend?” Field notes, Junsung’s utterance, 04/27/2008) during ongoing activities and including competitive remarks (e.g., “He is not your friend,” Field notes, Jessica’s utterance, 03/02/2008), 8 were used to coordinate group harmony (e.g., “You want to be a good friend.” Field note, Hyonmin’s utterance, 12/02/2007), and 6 were used to
exert control over another child (e.g., “If you’ll be my friend, I’ll give you some…” Field notes, Jessica’s utterance, 01/27/2008). The references to friendship in both a play situation and a non-play situation (e.g., doing worksheet at tables) were included because the children also used the word “friend” when participating in non-play activities.

Largely, the children made references to friendship to gain access to ongoing activities. In the following example, Jessica was invited to play with Seonil in the play house, but Myungwoo did not allow her to enter it. Then, Jessica offered friendship as a means of access:

Field notes/Video transcripts: 01/27/2008

Seonil, Junsung, and Myungwoo are playing with each other at the play house.

Seonil, Junsung, & Myungwoo: (pretending that the house is on fire) Fire, fire!

Seonil: (calling Jessica to the play house) Jessica, come! Fire.

They open and close a window of the play house. Soon Jessica walks to the play house and tries to enter it. However, Myungwoo does not allow her to come in and instead blocks her entrance with his arm. Jessica quickly moves to the window of the play house where Seonil and Junsung are repeatedly opening and closing the window.

Jessica: (to Seonil and Junsung) Can I be your friend?

Seonil & Junsung: (not responding to her, but focusing on their play) Fire! Fire!

Jessica: (asking once more and lowering her body toward the window) Can I be your friend?

Seonil: (nodding toward Jessica) Yes.

Junsung: (looking at Seonil and Jessica, he steps backward in order to make a space for Jessica)
After a few seconds, Jessica turns her body toward the other children and the teachers in the classroom.

Jessica: I’m their friend. They said [that] I’m their friend. Teacher, they’re my friend!

Jessica then tries to enter through the window immediately, but the window is too narrow for her to pass. Jessica steps on the corner of the window and tries to climb the roof of the play house.

Jessica: (stepping on the corner of the window) I’ll. Guys, I’ll go up here.

By asking, “Can I be your friend?” Jessica attempted to participate in the boys’ play. After Seonil and Junsung allowed Jessica to enter the play house, she publicly informed others of her right to play with them, saying “I’m their friend.” Her repeated remarks to her peers and teachers helped her justify her entry and alliance with the boys. Although Myungwoo initially resisted Jessica’s entry, Junsung did not express his preference, but silently allowed her to enter. Jessica’s public announcement worked as a preemptive strike against further resistance by Myungwoo as she made a deliberate attempt to enter the play house. Through her announcement, Jessica was able to reduce conflicts in her interaction with the boys and forced Myungwoo to accept her participation. Her use of the word “friend” in this incident helped her avoid aggravating conflicts.

In the children’s collective play, they often used the word “friend” to build solidarity in peer relations. However, this solidarity also resulted in further exclusion of other children from their activities as described in the following field notes:

Field notes/Video transcripts: 12/02/2007

The children mimic ants, crawling on the carpet under the direction of Miss Cho.
Myungwoo and Hyonmin do not follow the directions, but instead sit together and play with a toy. The toy has a winding path, into which one can drop small objects such as a bead or mini car from the top and see the results. The two boys occasionally look up at the other children. When Yongjae crawls toward them, Myungwoo and Hyonmin make references to their friendship.

Myungwoo: (to Yongjae) You are no\textsuperscript{26} my friend (pushing Yongjae with his hands).
Hyonmin: (to Myungwoo) You are my friend?
Myungwoo: (pointing to Hyonmin with his finger) You are my friend. (pointing to himself) You are my friend.
Hyonmin: (pointing to Yongjae) You’re not friend, OK?
Yongjae: (with a strong voice) I’m just an ant!
Myungwoo: (to Yongjae) You are not my friend.
Yongjae: I’m just an ant! (moving and touching Kyuwon’s shoes like an ant).

When Yongjae approached, Myungwoo and Hyonmin verbally confirmed their friendship. Except for Myungwoo and Hyonmin, the other children participated in ant-like movements. Yongjae did not intend to participate in their play, but by moving his body towards their area, he invaded the two boys’ interactive space. As Corsaro (1985) explained in his investigation of children’s “protection of interactive space,” Yongjae was considered an intruder in the two boys’ play. By affirming their relationship through references to friendship, the two boys built their “we-ness.” Once Hyonmin confirmed Myungwoo’s friendship with him, he announced his exclusion of Yongjae by stating, “You’re not friend, OK?” In this incident, Myungwoo and Hyonmin also used their friendship to be engaged in their own activity and not follow the

\textsuperscript{26} Myungwoo used ‘no’ instead of ‘not’ at the moment.
teacher’s direction. Thus, the children used references to friendship in order to “gain control of their lives and to share that control with each other” (Corsaro & Eder, 1990, p. 202).

**Children’s Conflicts in Peer Culture**

As in all human relationships, children do not always have sweet, pleasant, and peaceful peer relations. Conflicts, arguments, debates, or disputes among peers often arise in their peer culture. Conflicts occurred even in close friendships, for example that of Hyonmin and Seonil, who frequently sat and played together:

*Field notes/Video transcripts: 04/13/2008*

Jessica lies on her stomach on the carpet and colors a worksheet given by the teacher. Seonil, who has already finished his worksheet earlier at the table, walks to Jessica and sits down near her.

Jessica: (to Seonil) Just watch me color.

A few seconds later, Hyonmin comes over.

Jessica: (to Hyonmin) Don’t watch me color because you’re not supposed to come to my house.

Hyonmin: That’s not fair. Everyone, You!

Jessica: [I] don’t care.

Hyonmin: We’re all friends. We’re all friends.

Seonil & Jessica: (no response)

Hyonmin: (after a few seconds) I’m not your friend, you guys.

Jessica: I don’t care.

Hyonmin: I’m not your friend anymore, you guys.

Jessica: I don’t care!
Hyonmin: (pointing at Seonil) You and… Jessica, all of you, I’m not going to talk with you.

Seonil: (in a soft voice to Hyonmin) Stop talking…

Jessica: (to Hyonmin) He [Seonil]’s nice to me now. (to Seonil) He [Hyonmin]’s not your friend, right?

Seonil: Yes.

Hyonmin: I don’t understand. Huh!

Episodes like this were not uncommon in children’s relations. However, children’s conflicts were often perceived by adults either as necessitating intervention or as reflecting children’s inherent selfishness or aggression (Killen & Turiel, 1991).

Researchers have begun to understand that children’s conflicts are a part of the natural social interaction that they engage in (Goodwin, 1983, 1990) and are important elements for children’s development (Iskandar, Laursen, Finkelstein, & Fredrickson, 1995; Shantz, 1987). As such, developmental psychologists have focused on examining the relations between conflicts and resolutions (e.g., Chen, Fein, Killen, & Tam, 2001; Hartup, Laursen, Stewart, & Eastenson, 1988; Killen & Sueyoshi, 1995). However, researchers in other fields have provided different perspectives on children’s conflicts. Sociolinguistic and ethnographic researchers have focused on the interactive process in verbal conflicts; their findings have revealed that conflicts are essential components in children’s discursive practices. For example, Maynard (1985) affirmed that through conflicts, children “produce social organization, create political alignments, and thereby realize their practical interests within a changing set of social relationships” (p. 208). Others researchers have found that through conflicts, children learn to maintain group boundaries (e.g., Farris, 2000; Goodwin, 1990; Katriel, 1985; Kyratzis & Guo, 2001) and develop cognitive
and communicative strategies (e.g., Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990b; Goodwin, 1990; Goodwin &
Goodwin, 1987; Sheldon, 1996).

Some researchers have demonstrated that children’s conflicts in peer interactions vary
from one cultural group to another. For example, Corsaro (1994) reported that young African-
American children in a Head Start program often used oppositional or competitive talk. In his
study, children seldom negatively responded to other children’s playful teasing (e.g., You better
get out my face!) or confrontational interactions (e.g., Get that block out the way!). He found that
the oppositional talk of African-American children served to “construct social identities,
cultivate friendships, and both maintain and transform the social order of their peer cultures” (p.
146). Similarly, Goodwin (1990) revealed that the oppositional talk of older African-American
children functions as “the opportunity to construct and display character, a process important in
their social organization as well as social development” (p. 188). Corsaro and Rizzo (1990b)
elaborated that Italian preschool children are engaged thoroughly in discussion as “complex,
stylistic, and aesthetically impressive [verbal] routines” (p. 40) of their peer culture, using
interactive patterns rarely shown by American preschool children. From his studies, Corsaro
(1994) argued that discussion in Italian children’s peer culture reflects the larger Italian culture,
which highly values discussion.

Similarly, Medina et al. (2001) noted that the ways preschool children in southern Spain
and Holland dealt with conflicts reflected the collectivistic and individualistic characteristics of
these countries. For example, when children from the two countries entered conflict situations,
preschool children in southern Spain tended to maintain interactions for a common goal over
personal interests, while Dutch children preserved personal goals. For example, although
physical rupture occurred in both children’s conflicts, it operated differently in two countries.
Spanish children tended to show temporary physical rupture and soon maintain their previous interactions while Dutch children tended to use physical rupture as solutions to conflict situations. Additionally, Farris (1991, 2000) discovered that Taiwanese preschool children’s conflicts reflect both their own peer culture and their adult culture. For example, in cross-gender play, girls are often asked to serve food to boys, reflecting the roles of women in traditional Taiwanese society. Farris found that when girls used aggressive language patterns in cross-gender conflicts, a practice not common among European-American preschool girls, this aggressive talk was believed “to subvert the gendered social order of Taiwan’s society” (p. 541). In addition, Katriel (1985) reported that brogez (the state of anger) in Israeli children is “a socially bounded interactional state” (p. 473). She noted that brogez allowed Israeli children to “handle conflict situations by declaring a phase of ‘time out’” (p. 476) and to reflect the social status they generally took for granted in their everyday lives.

This extensive research defines children’s conflicts as an interactive process through which children clearly reflect their local and larger cultural beliefs and values. Therefore, examining the ways in which my participants negotiated and created conflicts was meaningful in that it helped understand the values and beliefs reflected in their peer culture.

*Korean American Children’s Conflicts and Cultural Values*

As Rogoff (2003) claimed, each cultural community has its own practices, beliefs, and norms shared by participants. For young children, caregivers’ cultural values and beliefs influence their interactions with others and their views of the world. According to Min (1992), Korean immigrants have stronger ethnic attachments than other immigrant groups. Farver, Kim, and Lee (1995) also found that Korean immigrant parents’ cultural values and beliefs were influential in their children’s social development. Whereas European-American children were
socialized to think independently and express their sense of self, Korean-American children were encouraged to prioritize group harmony and control the sense of self (Farver, 1999). As such, Korean immigrants tend to retain Korean cultural values and beliefs that emphasize group cohesion, emotional self-control, and cooperation.

As discussed earlier, how children negotiate and handle their conflicts reflects the cultural values and norms they have learned from the adult world (Medina et al., 2001). When utilizing Corsaro’s (1992, 1997) interpretive reproduction approach, it becomes clear that Korean American children internalize and reproduce ways for dealing with conflicts by drawing upon their ethnic cultural values and beliefs. Because of this, before discussing the ways Korean-American children negotiated conflicts, I provide a brief overview of the values and norms shared in the Korean cultural community as well as at the heritage language school.

Korean culture has been described as a collectivistic culture in which interdependent relationships between people are highly valued. In contrast to the individualist culture of North America, which places value on the individual’s autonomy and personal interests, the collectivistic culture of East Asia tends to place value on relationships with others and fitting into others’ feelings and preferences (Shweder et al., 1998). Many researchers (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Hui & Triandis, 1986; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) have found that collectivistic cultures place social harmony above individual preferences. Shweder and his colleagues summarized the characteristics of the interdependent self valued in many East Asian cultural contexts as being (a) connected; (b) context-based; (c) relational, flexible, malleable, responsive to others’ expectations, preferences, and feelings; (d) similar to others and concerned with fitting in; (e) particularly sensitive to potential inadequacy, self-critical; (f) improvement and mastery-oriented; (g) open, receptive; and (h) fully engaged. (p. 901)
In this sense, Lee (1980) defined Korean culture as a “relationship culture.” In Korean culture the individual is understood mainly in relation to others and in contexts rather than based on one’s own traits or preferences. As in many East Asian cultures, Korean culture values maintaining a group identity and upholding group harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The interdependent self valued in Korean culture is reflected in Korean language practices. That is, Korean people tend to use *Woori* (we, our, or us) rather than *Na* (I, me, or my) in their sentence structure (Choi, Kim, & Choi, 1993; Kim & Choi, 1994). Specifically, *Woori* is “used to denote a group of people (such as ‘our family’), an entity (such as ‘our nation’), and even possessions (such as ‘our house’)” (Kim & Choi, 1994, p. 246). Due to the group-oriented language practice, Korean spouses often refer to each other as “our husband” and “our wife” rather than as “my husband” and “my wife.” These group-oriented values and beliefs were also observable in the interviews with caregivers in this study. For example, Seonil’s mother mentioned, “His [Seonil’s] behaviors represent what my family looks like” (Interview, 02/19/2008). This remark revealed that, for Seonil’s mother, her son’s behaviors were considered the representation of her family.

The primary characteristic of collectivistic cultures, which emphasize individuals understood within “the-self-in-relation-to-other” (Shweder et al., 1998, p. 899), was also reflected in the heritage language school environment. Mrs. Hong, the school coordinator, emphasized that the school stressed learning beyond mere academics; the children were also encouraged to “harmoniously get along with others” and “cooperate” (Interview, 01/27/2008). The layout of the Korean heritage language classroom reflected collectivistic cultural values. Unlike the typical American early childhood classroom, the furniture and materials (e.g., crayons, pencils, papers, etc) in the heritage language classroom were provided in a way that
encouraged the children to share with peers. For example, in the classroom, the tables had no individual child’s name. The children were able to select the table they wanted to sit at each week. When they worked on worksheets at the tables, two or three crayon boxes were given to the children to share. The teachers frequently mentioned that the children should share materials, saying, “Do you want to share it with her?” or “Share it.” The teachers encouraged the children to share even what they personally brought into the classroom as described in the following field notes:

Field notes: 01/13/2008

As the children play in the classroom, Miss Jang asks them to gather on the carpet to participate in rhythmical movement and game singing “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” in Korean. Before coming to the carpet area, Jessica and three other boys (Kyuwon, Junsung, and Yongjae) are playing with each other in the play house. Jessica, wearing her little white backpack, shares her cookies with the three boys. When the children hear Miss Jang’s direction, Jessica slowly moves toward the carpet, holding her bag of cookies in her hands. The three boys come to the carpet, each eating some of Jessica’s cookies. Around Jessica, other children gathered to receive pieces of cookies from her. Miss Jang repeatedly asks the children to take their seats on the carpet for the next activity. While Miss Jang arranges other children’s seats, Jessica comes to the carpet and begins to give her cookies to some other children. Myungwoo finally comes to the carpet. When Myungwoo sees Jessica’s cookies, he also tries to get a piece. Jessica says to him, “Wait. No,” and puts the bag of cookies back into her backpack. Miss Jang

27 In the heritage language classroom, there were three square tables, which allowed a maximum of four children to sit together. Usually, two tables were placed close to each other, and the other table was placed a little further away.
immediately tells Jessica, “If you’re not going to share with all, then you shouldn’t [eat] right now.” Jessica replies, “I shouldn’t share yet,” looking at Myungwoo. After Miss Jang confirms that all the children are ready to participate in the song, she tells the children: “OK. Stand up.”

The children were distracted by Jessica’s cookies. Although Miss Jang kept asking them to take their seats on the carpet and pay attention to her, it took time for the children to comply. After Miss Jang noticed that Jessica did not share her cookies with Myungwoo, she asked Jessica to either share them or stop eating them. Miss Jang’s original intention might have been to encourage Jessica to get ready for the next activity by having her quickly put her cookies back into her backpack. She could have just easily said that Jessica could not eat her cookies except for during an assigned time. Instead, Miss Jang told Jessica that she could eat her cookies on the condition that she share her cookies with all the children. Miss Jang’s remark presented her underlying belief that children should share everything with peers. This is quite a different perspective from American preschool teachers. For example, Martini (1994) noted that American parents and teachers tend to teach children to resolve their own conflicts by negotiating their individual interests.

I also found from the interviews with the caregivers that they valued sharing with others most highly. The caregivers expressed concern over how well their child shared materials or toys with other children. For example, when Joohee began attending the pre-kindergarten on weekdays and the heritage language school on Sundays, her mother shared the following concerns:
I’m concerned about the possession issue . . . about whether things are mine or yours . . . .

Now, she seems to willingly share. She did not readily share anything that she was eating with others before, but recently I have seen her sharing more . . . her behaviors now seem more natural and less peculiar.

Joohee’s mother expressed that sharing was an important area for Joohee to learn and develop. Similarly, Soojung’s mother also expressed how proud she was of her daughter because Soojung shared objects with others as well as trying to understand and be sensitive to her peers. One of the reasons why the caregivers value sharing objects seemed to be rooted in the fact that Koreans often interpret individualism as egoism; thus, the emphasis on the individual self and preferences is considered selfish, immature, and a threat to group harmony (Choi & Kim, 2003; Shweder et al., 1998). Thus, the cultural values which shape the children encouraged them to build relationships within a group through sensitively considering others and maintaining group harmony (e.g., sharing).

Friends in Peer Culture and Children’s Conflicts

The children in this study negotiated and handled their conflicts in peer culture in ways that reflect the cultural values and norms from the Korean cultural community as well as the heritage language school. Using the word “friend,” they tended to affirm the cultural values and norms when conflicts occurred among peers in their peer culture.

As discussed earlier, conflicts should be understood as a central feature of children’s peer culture (Corsaro, 2003). During my field work, I heard the word “friend” many times, particularly in conflict situations. As shown in the field notes on 04/13/2008 that I presented at the beginning of this section, when Hyonmin tried to gain entry into the activity that Seonil and
Jessica were already engaged, he said, “We’re all friends. We’re all friends,” in an attempt to participate in the activity. Here, Hyonmin used the word “friend” as a strategy for gaining entry. When his strategy failed, Hyonmin again used the word “friend,” but this time in defense or as a threat: “I’m not your friend.” To justify the exclusion of Hyonmin from the activity, Jessica made a remark that Seonil was “nice” to her. She then used the word “friend” to confirm the solidarity with Seonil and justify their exclusion of Hyonmin from their shared activity.

As Corsaro and his colleagues (e.g., Corsaro, 1985, 1997; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990b) reported, children use references to friendship in different contexts for different purposes. In particular, I paid attention to how conflicts occurred around incidents related to sharing, which was valued by many of these Korean American children’s caregivers. Researchers have found that sharing, more than anything else, triggers conflicts among young children (Killen & Turiel, 1991; Shantz, 1987). I noticed that conflicts over sharing often occurred among the participant children in this study as well.

Interestingly, the Korean-American children in this study often used references to friendship in order to maintain group harmony in the wake of conflict. For example, during my third visit to the heritage language classroom, I observed the following incident in which Sora tried to prevent her peers from entering into conflict:

Field notes: 11/04/2007

There are two crayon boxes on the two tables placed close to each other. Soojung, Jessica, Sora,28 and Junsung are sitting in a table. Next to the table, Kyuwon, Seonil, Myungwoo, Hyonmin, Boyong, Wonkyu, and Joohee (Michelle) are sharing the crayons and coloring worksheets. As they are coloring, Myungwoo and Hyonmin, who sit on the

28 Sora was a non-participant girl in the classroom.
other side of Jessica and Soojung, take a bunch of crayons and spread them out on their own papers. Soon other children, including Jessica and Soojung, complain about the two boys’ behavior. Sora, who is sitting next to Soojung, says to the class, “You don’t need to be mean. We’re friends, right?” The boys look around the other children for few seconds and do not say anything. Instead, they begin to return the crayons to each crayon box. Sora’s remark, “We’re friends, right?” momentarily soothed the children without the adult intervention. It also led to sharing among the children. Because this episode occurred in the 4th week after the class began (and the children only met three times before this week), the children’s peer relations were loosely structured. At that time, Sora did not have enough status to influence the other children. However, no one resisted Sora’s remark, and they all accepted it in silence. Here, Sora’s use of the word “friend” was to reduce conflict and maintain group harmony. Using the term “friend” for large group cohesion was not found in the studies carried out by Corsaro and his colleagues (e.g., Corsaro, 1985; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990b).

Sora’s remark was quite different from the typical use of the term, “friend” observed in European-American children’s peer relations (e.g., Corsaro, 1985). On one hand, although European-American children in Corsaro’s study frequently asked, “We’re friends, right?”, Sora’s remark was neither a means to achieve access to a play group nor a strategy to exclude someone from the play group. Instead, the term “friend” was used to encourage the group collaboration by reducing conflict among peers. In this sense, Sora’s reference to friendship reflected an aspect of these children’s ethnic cultural values. Through the reference to friendship, the children in this study affirmed their common understanding that sharing with each other is an appropriate and desirable behavior.
The effort to reduce conflict and increase group harmony reflected in the Korean American children’s peer relations was also observed by Farver (1999). This researcher examined European-American children’s and Korean-American children’s interactions during their pretend play in preschool settings. She found that European-American children showed more aggressive and negative attitudes toward their peers’ initiations and contributions to the play than Korean-American children did. She also noted that Korean-American children, whose culture emphasizes the maintenance of harmonious relationships, “responded in cooperative fashion to peers’ play initiations” and “were non-confrontational in their dyadic play” (p. 122). She explained that European-American children’s play tended to have more conflicts due to their culture’s emphasis on the assertion of the self.

Another incident of the word “friend” being used to diminish the children’s conflicts over sharing was observed when the children made a transition from free play to a group activity as illustrated below:

Field note/Video transcripts: 12/02/2007

After the children have had some free play time, Miss Cho, the teacher, asks them to gather on the carpet. Some children do not pay much attention to her as she tries to settle them into a circle. As Miss Cho arranges the seats for Boyong, Wonkyu, Yongjae, and Kyuwon, Myungwoo advances to the carpet with a truck in his hand from a toy box on a nearby table in the classroom and tries to sit next to Junsung, who takes his seat nearby Kyuwon. Soon, Junsung tries to take the truck away from Myungwoo.

Myungwoo: (pinching Junsung’s cheek) You’re a baby! You baby! You baby!
Junsung: (to Myungwoo): I’m not. (taking the truck away from Myungwoo)
Myungwoo: (protecting his truck from Junsung) No! (moving away from Junsung)
Junsung: (loudly) Come here!

Myungwoo: (pointing at Junsung) You! Not, it [unintelligible].

Hyonmin, who has been watching the conflict, walks over to them and tells Myungwoo.

Hyonmin: (to Myungwoo) Peter [Myungwoo’s English name], you want to be a good friend.

Myungwoo: (staring at Hyonmin and Junsung for a few seconds in turn)

Junsung: (with upset voice) I don’t want to be a baby!

Myungwoo: (trying to put the truck in a spot nearby Junsung)

Soon, Miss Cho, who arranged the other children’s seats, intervened in the conflict, saying, “Paul [Junsung’s English name] is not a baby. He is a big boy.”

Myungwoo: (mumbling) This, (pointing to Junsung)… took it (moving back away from Junsung)

In this episode, Hyonmin intervened in and tried to resolve the conflict between Junsung and Myungwoo, by saying to Myungwoo, who was teasing Junsung, “You want to be a good friend.” Indeed, Hyonmin’s reference to friendship worked to reduce the conflict before the teacher’s intervention. Although Myungwoo was still hesitant to share the truck with Junsung when hearing Hyonmin’s remark at first, he eventually put the truck next to Junsung as a suggestion of his willingness to share. Miss Cho’s intervention, provided later, focused on soothing Junsung’s emotion. So, it was indeed Hyonmin’s intervention and his strategic use of the term “a good friend” that helped resolve the conflict between his peers. As Killen and Turiel (1991) found, the children had the capability of resolving conflicts in their own ways, and one of the primary strategies they used to resolve conflicts was to talk about friendship. Similar to the remark made

29 Myungwoo used “took” but meant “take” in this instance.
by Sora in the earlier vignette, Hyonmin’s reference to “being a good friend” encouraged his peer to control his personal “desires, goals, and emotions that can disturb the harmonious equilibrium of interpersonal transaction” (Shweder et al., 1998, p. 899).

With regard to sharing objects, I also observed the children referring to friendship to resolve their conflicts in the pre-kindergarten religious education class:

Field note/Video transcripts: 12/16/2007

The children are making Christmas cards for their parents. Each table has a crayon box to share. Soojung, Jessica, Kyuwon, and Junghoon30 sit together at one table. Soojung sits next to Jessica, and Kyuwon sits in front of Jessica. Mrs. Lee, the religious education teacher, asks the class to finish their coloring, saying, “Let’s finish!” Soojung, Jessica, and Kyuwon immediately respond to Mrs. Lee.

Kyuwon: (to Mrs. Lee) We’re not done.

Jessica: I’m still not done.

Soojung: I’m still not done, either.

Jessica pulls the crayon box toward her and picks out several pieces of crayon.

Kyuwon: (to Jessica) Don’t take all of it.

Soojung: Yeah, don’t take all of it. Please put it in the middle… (after few seconds) How, how mean, how mean you are! Just put it in the middle!

Jessica immediately and carefully moves the crayon box to a position midway between Soojung and herself, but the location is still far from Kyuwon and Junghoon. After a few seconds, Junghoon stands up and stretches his arm toward Jessica in order to pick up crayons. For a few seconds, Jessica stares at Junghoon, not saying any words.

30 Junghoon was a non-participant boy in this study, but attended the religious education class during my study.
Soojung: (soon, to Jessica) See? Other people have to stand up to reach them. (after few seconds) It should be in the middle (moving the crayon box)!

However, Jessica moves the crayon box back toward herself.

Soojung: She’s not putting it in the middle. I’m not being your friend!

Jessica does not respond to Soojung. Instead, she continues coloring her Christmas card.

Soojung and Jessica do not talk to each other for a few minutes.

In this vignette, Jessica put the crayon box back on a spot between her and Soojung after hearing Soojung’s remark about Jessica being “mean.” This helped Soojung have easy access to crayons. Nonetheless, Soojung spoke up for other peers at the table who had difficulty accessing crayons. She even announced that if her suggestion of moving the crayon box to the middle of the table for all was not accepted, she would not be a friend with Jessica. As in Hyonmin’s intervention mentioned above, Soojung revealed in this incident that maintaining group cohesiveness was more important than pursuing one’s personal needs.

These findings parallel other studies of non-Western children’s interactions. For example, Whiting and Edwards (1988) observed that children in non-Western communities31 showed prosocial behaviors, which “attempt to persuade the social partner [other children] to behave so as to benefit the group or behave in a socially approved manner” (p. 182). Martini (1994) also found that Polynesian children tended to maintain group solidarity in their peer groups by helping and supporting each other. These studies showed how children’s interactions reflect the values of their cultural communities. The Korean-American children in this study made

31 Whiting and Edwards (1988) examined many children’s social interactions in 12 different local communities from 7 countries (Liberia, Kenya, India, Mexico, Philippines, Japan, and the United States).
references to friendship in order to resolve their conflict around sharing, particularly for the purpose of building and maintaining group harmony as valued in the traditional Korean culture.

Corsaro (1997) argued that children’s peer interactions are “deeply embedded in [their] collective, interpretive reproduction of their culture” (p. 49). Many researchers also noted that strategies used by children to resolve conflicts in their peer interactions reflect values and beliefs of the culture in which they are situated (e.g. Aydt & Corsaro, 2003; Goodwin, 1990; Kyratzis, 2001; Kyratzis & Guo, 2001; Sheldon, 1996). The Korean-American children in this study upheld and distributed traditional Korean cultural values about sharing in their conflict resolution with peers. The Korean-American children made references to friendship as a strategy to pursue their personal goals as well as to build and maintain group cohesiveness in peer relations.

In summary, the children in this study constructed their own groups and became gatekeepers for each group based on language use and proficiency. At the same time, they continued to negotiate and develop their relations through referring to friendships. In the process of building their relations, the children also experienced conflict situations that may be considered problematic social interactions that should be prevented in the eyes of adults. However, children’s conflicts are a way to understand “what they could expect from each other by a way of friendship” (Rizzo, 1989, p. 98) and allow children to acquire social knowledge through their negotiation with peers. As shown in this chapter, the children negotiated their conflicts, reflecting the maintenance of group harmony highly valued in the Korean cultural community as well as the heritage language school. Their process of negotiating conflicts was shown through looking closely at the word ‘friend’ that they used in peer relations. This chapter also affirms that children learn from and teach to each other the norms and beliefs valued in their cultural community in order to grow as competent members and participants in their peer culture.
CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled . . . We are, and always will be, the United States of America. (Barack Obama’s victory speech, 11/04/2008)

This study was an attempt to understand how Korean-American children, as a cultural and linguistic minority group, acquire and negotiate social and cultural knowledge with their peers in their shared bilingual and bicultural contexts. I focused on the children’s active agency in their construction and negotiation of meaning with peers. To accomplish this goal, I paid particular attention to the children’s naming practices and references to friendship as a window onto their developing sense of identity and creation of peer culture. To deeply understand the children’s lives, I also investigated the perspectives of their caregivers. In what follows, I discuss how these children were situated in bilingual and bicultural contexts in general and the host society in particular. I reiterate the importance of recognizing young children’s active agency in their lives and conclude with implications of the study for early childhood educators and researchers.

Discussion

Korean-American Children, Their Caregivers, and the Heritage Language School

This study revealed that these Korean-American children live in complex bilingual and bicultural contexts and are under great pressure from their caregivers to acquire social and
cultural knowledge of both Korean and American cultures. The Korean-American children participated in dual cultural systems, and thus continuously negotiated different cultural practices and values in their lives. As described in Chapter 4, caregivers wanted their children to maintain their Korean culture and language while simultaneously wanting them to acquire American culture and adjust successfully to the host society. Against this backdrop, the participant children attended the heritage language school.

The results of this study revealed that caregivers’ own experiences as immigrants in the United States intensified their desire for their children’s heritage language learning. Each caregiver wanted his or her child to enjoy an easy childhood through acceptance into the host society while still maintaining their heritage culture. The caregivers’ underlying beliefs about the importance of maintaining their heritage language were deeply connected to the social and cultural barriers that they themselves had experienced, directly or vicariously. From these caregivers’ perspectives, their children’s position as a participant in both cultural communities was similar to their own position as immigrants; many of the caregivers, regardless of their tenure in the United States, still felt as if they straddled two cultures. Some children’s parents, who were also once children of immigrants, shared social and cultural constraints that they had perceived or experienced. Hyonmin’s mother’s analogy with the “salmon’s cycle” and Jessica’s grandmother’s story about the “failed” life of Jessica’s father clearly showed how the caregivers worried about their children’s uncertain future life in the host society. The caregivers genuinely wanted their children to be successful participants in the host society, and were concerned whether they would be successfully integrated into the mainstream culture. The caregivers thought that the maintenance of their heritage language and culture would function as a safety net in case their children failed to adjust successfully to the host society.
Although some of the caregivers had lived in the United States for quite a long time, the fears and uncertainties they expressed resulted from an acculturative stress (Oh, Koeske, & Sales, 2002). As shown in Chapter 4, for example, Junsung’s mother, a 20-year U.S. resident, still found it stressful to mingle with Americans. The problem was not language proficiency, because she was fluent in English. Although she did not directly mention the reason, I suspect that different cultural norms and values, which she experienced as social barriers and constraints, hindered her in dealing with acculturative stress. The caregivers who had relatively recent immigrants also described having acculturative stress. For example, Myungwoo’s mother felt uncomfortable that she always had to spell out her Korean name many times. She shared that she seemed to be treated differently depending on her English and Korean name (see Chapter 5). Thus, the caregivers, as immigrants or children of immigrants, expressed their discomfort with complicated cultural norms and values between the host society and the ethnic community. Indeed, they had a double dose of acculturative stress in that they encountered challenges from both their own adjustment and their children’s adjustment to the host society.

Along the same lines as the acculturative stress of raising their children in the host society, the caregivers felt that they had difficulty in getting social and emotional support for their children’s development from the formal school context. In particular, the different perspectives on child development at home (including within the ethnic community) and in the formal school settings drove the caregivers to perceive a lack of social and emotional support for their children. For example, as shown in Myungwoo’s case (see Chapter 4), the “touching culture” shared and valued at home and in the ethnic community was considered problematic and often rejected in the formal school; Myungwoo’s behavior was often interpreted as a disability in his formal school. At the same time, the caregivers’ anxiety over possible misunderstandings
about their children’s behaviors made them feel constantly nervous about having their children interact with American children. Thus, their desire for the psychological well-being of their children and themselves outside of the formal school context led to the enrollment of their children in the heritage language school.

Although my research questions have focused on the children’s peer culture, the findings in this study also shed light on the heritage language and its meaning to the young children of immigrants. As Zhou (1997) noted, most scholarly attention has been paid to adult immigrants rather than to their children. Therefore, the ethnic children of immigrants, including Korean-American or Korean children, are marginalized in the current research. In addition, the existing research on heritage language use tends to concentrate more on ethnic identity (e.g., Bae, 2003; Cho, 2000; Lee, 2002; Tse, 1997) than on what a heritage language (school) means to young children in relation to their caregiver’s experiences and the structural and cultural barriers of the host society. I believe the findings of this study will provide researchers with insight into why immigrant caregivers send their young child to a heritage language school beyond just a desire to foster and maintain their ethnic identity and heritage culture.

In addition, I found that the Korean American children’s social boundaries were often limited to their ethnic community. Most children rarely had opportunities to interact with a variety of peers, including their classmates, outside of formal school settings. Although the caregivers wanted their children to have these opportunities, they did not know how to access their children’s peers who were from non-Korean racial and ethnic backgrounds. Because the caregivers had difficulty entering the social networks of the school and host society, their children also had a limited social network beyond the heritage school.
Researchers have found that human beings both shape and are shaped by cultural processes (e.g., Rogoff, 2003; Shweder et al., 1998). The Korean-American children in this study are no exception; they participated in dual cultural processes. Through peer interactions, the most critical tool for socialization (e.g., Cosraro, 1985; Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002; Kyratzis, 2004), they negotiated the social and cultural knowledge acquired from the adult world.

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is the fact that young Korean-American children actively constructed and reconstructed social and cultural knowledge rather than passively receiving such knowledge. In this study, the naming practices used by the Korean American children to address their peers (see Chapter 5) demonstrate Corsaro’s (1997) ideas of “interpretive reproduction” (p. 18). Corsaro (1985, 1992, 1997) documented how children contribute to the production and reproduction of cultural practices by negotiating their participation in adult-child routines and creating their own meanings and routines in their own peer culture. In this sense, children not only adopt adults’ practices, but also create their own practices that can influence adults’ practices in turn. In this study, adults’ naming practices had a significant impact on the children’s naming practices, but the children did not always passively follow adults’ practices. Instead, the children negotiated adults’ practices and constructed their own naming practices based on the understandings of norms they shared with their peers. As a critical device for understanding what children share with peers, paying attention to children’s peer interactions helps us uncover the process of children’s meaning-making (Corsaro, 1985; Goodwin, 1990; Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2007) in peer culture. In this study, the Korean-American children shared their sensitivity to their peers’ physical appearance, dominant language use, and language proficiency through peer interactions. I found that the children’s naming practices
embedded in peer interactions provided useful information about how a child constructs peer relations. For example, naming practices revealed information about which children were least called on by their peers to play or interact (e.g., Boyong and Wonkyu) and about which children frequently interacted with others (e.g., a core group—Hyonmin, Junsung, Myungwoo, and Seonil) (see Chapter 5).

Along the same lines, the children internalized and reflected the traditional Korean cultural value of group harmony. The Korean American children in this study used friendship not only to pursue their individual goals (e.g., gaining entry to peers’ ongoing activity), but also to establish and maintain group cohesiveness (see Chapter 6). The children internalized and reproduced knowledge, norms, and values in their peer culture. By participating in “socially interactive process[es]” (Greenfield, 1997, p. 303), they co-constructed a “custom complex” (Shweder et. al, 1998, p. 872) by incorporating the values and practices of their ethnic cultural community into their peer culture. The findings of this study clearly show the fallacy of viewing children’s interactions with the adult world as a “unidirectional action in which children are mainly passive and have little impact in the processes they are engaged in” (Pontecorvo, Fasulo, & Sterponi, 2001, p. 2). This study also sheds light on cultural and linguistic minority children’s peer culture, an avenue of study which has rarely received scholarly attention.

Children’s Peer Culture and Construction of Self

This study also reveals that children’s peer culture contributes to making sense of diverse expectations, beliefs, and values in different cultural systems. Specifically, as shown in Chapters 5 and 6, the Korean-American children learned to read each other, construct shared meaning about who they are, and uphold their shared values through their peer interactions. For example,
Joohee clearly recognized that she was addressed differently (by her English name) in her formal school. She always represented herself with her Korean name when she interacted or played with other children in the heritage language school. Through her self-representation, other children constructed who Joohee is and how that identity was different from Jessica’s, even though she shared the same Korean name with Jessica (see Chapter 5).

Here, I apply the notions of the self being “contextualized” (Walsh, 2002, p. 103) and “context-based” (Shweder et al., 1998, p. 901) to discuss the role of peer culture in the development of children’s selves. Drawing on Corsaro’s (1997) definition of peer culture, I assert that children’s naming practices are a significant part of their peer culture in that they are routines “produc[ed] and shar[ed] in interaction with peers” (p. 95). The naming practices that the children and their caregivers were engaged in revealed how the children develop multiple and “contextualized selves” (Walsh, 2002, p. 103). The children had both English and Korean names and introduced themselves differently in different contexts (e.g., using Korean names at home and English names in school). Understanding that they needed to use their English names in their formal school can be an indication to these children that they are entering a cultural community where practices and values different from their ethnic community are promoted, and where a change in the presentation of who they are might make sense. By sharing the various names with which they are addressed with peers in different contexts, the young Korean American children may well develop an understanding of their and their peers’ multiple and contextualized selves through peer interactions. This is also connected to children’s agency. In this sense, by adopting adults’ naming practices, the children internalized their own sense of self and contributed to shaping those of their peers. The children’s sensitivity to naming patterns observed during the
adult-child interactions revealed that both adults and peers played the role of significant others in constructing a child’s self.

The children in the study also learned how their sense of self could be “context-based” (Shweder et al., 1998, p. 901). As shown in Chapter 5, the fact that all of these children had both English and Korean names reflected their caregivers’ dual expectations. That is, the caregivers wanted their children to have comfortable and successful lives in the host society while still being able to maintain their ethnic cultural identity. As many of the caregivers in this study stated, they gave their children English names because they wanted them to be able to interact with people in the host society without difficulty. This would allow the children to blend in more readily instead of standing out due to Korean names perceived as unfamiliar and difficult to pronounce for non-Korean speakers in the host society. The caregiver’s desires and expectations might also reflect the interdependent self valued in many East Asian cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder et al., 1998). That is, giving their children English names might have resulted from the caregivers’ desire for their children to be “similar to others and concerned with fitting in” with the host society (Shweder et al., 1998, p. 901). Children’s unique Korean names might be viewed as producing discomfort for people in the host society because of the difficult and unfamiliar pronunciations. Instead, in the host society oriented toward individualism, the children’s unique names can be encouraged and valued despite their “otherness” because an individual’s autonomy and personal interests can be paralleled with uniqueness. Korean culture as relationship culture is also reflected in the ways that the Korean American children tried to maintain group harmony by controlling their own and their peers’ personal interests through conflict avoidance (see Chapter 6). By adopting the cultural values and norms of their ethnic cultural community in order to resolve conflicts with their peers, the Korean-American children
seemed to develop senses of self that were “context-based” and “relational” (Shweder et al., p. 901). Thus, the children’s peer culture contributes to their developing sense of self and in turn reflects the values of the culture in which they are situated.

Implications

For Early Childhood Educators

Starting school is a significant event for young children. Children face new changes and challenges in their lives as they enter the school system (Kreider, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). They have to adjust to rules, tasks, and physical environments that are different from what they experience at home (Ladd & Kochenderfer, 1996). For young children from cultural and linguistic minority groups, school can be a place where they are exposed to and learn about different cultural values and practices from adults and peers outside of their ethnic cultural communities. Indeed, the caregivers in this study shared how quickly their child learned English but lost their heritage language once the children began attending English-speaking daycare centers and the formal school, as Myungwoo’s mother and Junsung’s mother expressed (see Chapter 4). In particular, Myungwoo’s mother even struggled with whether she should speak only English in order to help her son adjust to school, as suggested by a teacher at his daycare center.

Early childhood educators can understand bilingual and bicultural children’s transition to school by considering the different, and at times conflicting, values and practices these children have experienced in both the mainstream culture and the ethnic cultural community (Pianta, Rimm-Kaufman, & Cox, 1999; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). In this study, the Korean-American children, who were situated in complicated contexts with a variety of family immigrant statuses and histories, certainly bring different values and beliefs into the classroom.
Understanding the children’s complicated situation, and how and why they may have different values from their caregiver’s parenting, can help teachers prepare for how to support those children and to understand their families in order to facilitate their school adjustment. One of the values held by the Korean immigrant caregivers was a desire to promote children’s social interactions for their social development. For example, Seonil’s mother wanted play groups at Seonil’s daycare center to be reconstituted by his teacher, although her wish was not realized (see Chapter 4). In addition, the caregivers were concerned for their children’s cultural identities, even before their children attended school. For example, Seonil’s mother clearly persuaded him who he should be through naming practices. As another example, Yongjae’s and Junsung’s mothers both started to consider seriously who their children were or should be when their children began attending school. Given this information, and by paying careful attention to children and their parents, teachers can help children adjust successfully by providing instructions congruent with the caregivers’ expectations (e.g., social interaction, cultural identity).

Bilingual and bicultural views of children’s social and linguistic competence can help educators dispel deficit assumptions that are often offered as explanations of unfamiliar behaviors when teachers teach cultural and linguistic minority children. Unfortunately, some of the caregivers in this study shared how their children were perceived as having behavior disorders (e.g., ADHD) or personality problems (e.g., shyness) by the school personnel due to different cultural expectations and beliefs about child development (see Chapter 4). Such cultural misunderstandings lead immigrant caregivers to feel as if teachers and school systems do not fully support their children’s well-being and development. This in turn leads these caregivers to heavily rely on their ethnic community for social and emotional support for themselves and their children.
The perceived separation between the formal school and the ethnic community (i.e., academic support as coming from the formal school and social/emotional support as coming from the ethnic community, including the heritage language school) held by the caregivers shows how, for many immigrant families, school is considered a place where their children’s potential is constrained rather than fully recognized (McDermott & Varenne, 1996). An educational approach that goes beyond child development knowledge based on the 20th century’s grand developmental theories, which focused on the role of biology, rather than culture, in human development (Bruner, 1996; Lee & Walsh, 2001; Lubeck, 1996), can allow educators to support minority children and immigrant families in avoiding dissonance between family and school. Paying careful attention to young immigrant children’s interactions outside of formal school settings like heritage language school can help educators to respond “sensitively to the deepest realities of children’s lives” (Ayers, 2001, p. 77). I argue in this study that observation and analysis of children’s peer culture and peer interaction, a much neglected area in teacher education, can be an important foundation for educators who want to design learning experiences that will be meaningful to children’s lives.

In addition, this study provides teachers with insight into how peer interaction can be utilized for children’s language development. As Jessica’s grandmother explained, Jessica’s heritage language developed dramatically after she started to attend the heritage language school, although she spoke only English at home because of her family background (as shown in Chapters 4 and 5). Similarly, Junsung showed excellent heritage language development over time. According to his mother, she observed that he often asked and practiced translating English words into Korean at home.
Paying attention to children’s peer culture can help early childhood educators broaden their perspectives on teaching and learning by recognizing that “children are learning all the time, and not just what we [as educators] think we are teaching them” (Ayers, 2001, p. 31). As Corsaro (1985, 1997) argued, children acquire beliefs and values within local and larger cultural contexts and act upon those beliefs and values in their peer culture. The interview with Seonil’s mother revealed how attitudes toward a child who speaks English as a second language might influence his or her peer interactions:

*When he [Seonil] was two and half years old, he attended a daycare center. At that time, he was the only one with black eyes and hair. One day, a Korean girl named Eunhae joined his class. . . . I asked him, “Do you often play with Eunhae?” And he said, “Oh, mommy, I don’t want to play with Eunhae.” I asked him again, “Why?” He responded that Eunhae was considered a “baby” [by other children] because “she can’t speak English at all.” He told me that she spoke “baby talk.” (Interview, 02/19/2008)*

This vignette shows how Seonil, who was only two and half years old, and his classmates shared a perception about a newly arrived peer who had limited English proficiency. Whenever Seonil’s mother visited the classroom as a volunteer, she observed that the newcomer, Eunhae, was often scolded for not following the teacher’s directions well due to her limited language proficiency and her ignorance of unfamiliar classroom rules. It is quite possible that these children might have learned to perceive her as a baby from the adults, including teachers, who viewed Eunhae’s limited English proficiency as a babyish trait. This example demonstrates the significant direct and indirect influence adults can have on children’s peer relations. Thoughtful attention paid to young children’s peer relations could lead teachers to critically examine their own attitudes and
beliefs about children’s language and cultural behaviors, and consider ways to support newcomers’ integration into the classroom community.

This study also highlights the importance of taking a child’s name into serious consideration. Educators can initiate conversation around whether the child has different names; what names are preferred in different contexts, including school, and why; what meanings each name has; and so on. A project on children’s (and their families’) names in the classroom at the beginning of the school year may well help the teacher and children learn about each other and realize how a person’s name can reflect the history and culture of his or her family. I believe that a teacher’s careful attention to each child’s name is critical to building a supportive environment, particularly for children from immigrant families who are likely to experience different naming practices between home and school, and who may go through a process of identity negotiation.

This study also sheds light on the importance of the teacher’s systematic observation of children and of her own interaction with each child. Through such observation, teachers can elucidate what factors influence the construction of each peer group in a classroom and support the children in appropriate ways. For example, as discussed above, even very young children have an awareness of limited language proficiency among peers and reflect this awareness in their peer relations. In order to facilitate peer relations among children with different levels of English proficiency in the classroom, teachers can design group activities that encourage each child to interact and build relations with various peers. The systematic observations of children’s peer interactions would allow teachers to identify dominant peer groups and marginalized children, and design activities that will facilitate interactions between these children. As this study revealed, the marginalized status of Boyong and Wonkyu in their peer relations paralleled their low frequency of interaction with the teachers almost exactly. Careful reflection on their...
own interactions with individual children would help the teacher identify children whom they might be neglecting.

Along the same lines, this study revealed that children’s conflicts allow children to actively learn and negotiate beliefs and norms valued in their cultural community and to take control of their own lives. As Corsaro (1997) noted, children’s conflicts should be interpreted as components of children’s peer culture that contribute to children’s socialization. This study revealed that Korean-American children’s conflicts reflected traditional Korean cultural values. Through their conflicts over sharing, these children developed and presented the relational and interdependent self valued in their ethnic cultural community (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder et al., 1998). Early childhood educators can be encouraged to consider the educational role of conflicts and problem solving in children’s social interactions and to experiment with refraining from immediate intervention in those situations. Encouraging children to resolve conflicts on their own can help them negotiate and construct beliefs and norms valued in their cultural communities, including their peer culture. In turn, this enables educators to better understand the shared cultural values and practices reflected in children’s peer relations and utilize this awareness in their classroom instruction.

Corsaro (2005) argued that when insights gained from children’s peer culture are integrated into the school’s curriculum, children find their learning at school meaningful. In spite of the importance of children’s peer culture, however, neither the field of early childhood teacher education nor general teacher education consider it as a viable pedagogical resource. As Lee (2006) found, the popular culture shared by children was devalued in the classroom; instead, “preservice courses still focus on the transmission of knowledge without reflecting on other aspects of schooling and children’s actual lives” (p. 266). Currently, early childhood teacher
education tends to focus on the teaching of content areas rather than how to understand and foster young children’s voices. The lack of appreciation for children’s voices in teacher education courses reflects and reinforces the prevalent perspective of children as passive recipients of knowledge rather than as active constructors of meaning in their lives. I argue that the pedagogical use of peer culture should be deliberately included in teacher education, as it allows preservice and inservice teachers to be engaged in meaningful teaching and learning by reflecting children’s perspectives. Examining and understanding children’s peer culture in various ways may eventually enable the silenced voice of children, who are the key players in teaching and learning, to be heard.

In relation to peer culture as a viable pedagogical resource, in particular, teacher educators and teachers should reconsider peer interactions and daily routines in the early childhood classroom. While I visited elementary schools when supervising student teachers, I often felt that classroom activities, particularly in the younger grade levels, were too structured or did not provide enough opportunities for children to interact with their peers. Clearly, lack of time for peer interaction in the classroom is partially a result of the academic skill-drill practices (e.g., No Child Left Behind, Reading First) being emphasized at the national and state levels for accountability in early schooling. As Pellegrini and Bohn (2005) noted, children are coming to lose their opportunities to engage in unstructured peer interaction because of the pressure of accountability. Schools tend to maximize instructional time and to reduce non-instructional time, such as recess and play.

In addition, children’s peer interactions seem to be devalued compared with children’s interactions with adults. For example, Tudge, Odero, Hogan, and Etz (2003) found that teachers perceived preschool children who initiated and actively engaged in conversation with adults as
competent children. However, researchers have also argued that children’s peer interaction is vital in that it influences children’s school adjustment and academic performance (e.g., Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005; Pellegrini & Smith, 1993). In their article, Pellegrini and Bohn (2005) provided Stevenson and Lee’s (1990) study as an example of an empirical that supports children’s peer interactions. Stevenson and Lee’s (1990) study examines how breaks during periods of sustained classroom tasks positively led to children paying more attention to these tasks after their breaks. Stone (1992) also examined the context of children’s conversational narratives in a preschool. She found that children’s peer interactions tended to occur mostly in unstructured time such as lunch, arrival, and free play; and least in structured “circle” time. In this sense, children’s peer interactions afford opportunities to develop social skills as well as academic achievement (Pellegrini & Bohn, 2005). Therefore, teachers should promote various opportunities for children to have dynamic interactions with their peers by providing more non-instructional time such as play and recess. To do this, educational policymakers should also be aware of the importance of peer interactions, which contribute to children’s school adjustment and academic performance, and seek ways to find a balance between instructional time stemming from the need for accountability on the one hand, and the importance of children’s peer interactions.

For Early Childhood Researchers

This study focused on understanding Korean-American children’s lives outside of formal school settings. It extends the literature on children’s peer relations and peer culture by demonstrating the ways in which these children use their agency to negotiate meanings with peers and gain control of their lives. As noted earlier, there is a dearth of literature on how children from cultural and linguistic minority groups construct their peer culture and negotiate their cultural knowledge. In my view, the paucity of literature regarding minority children’s peer
culture and peer interactions reflects an overall neglect and deficit view of these children’s capability of meaning making. Indeed, research on cultural and linguistic minority children, specifically young Korean and Korean-American children, is exceedingly scarce and is scattered across the literature (e.g., the literature on play, language socialization, ethnic identity, etc.). I argue that this area is in great need of interdisciplinary inquiry and collaboration. Particularly, future research needs to pay attention to young children’s peer culture and its influence on their developing sense of self.

In addition, considering the fact that young children engage with each other through non-verbal peer interaction as well as verbal interaction, non-verbal peer interaction (e.g., gazes, gestures, physical position, and silence) is crucial for cultural and linguistic minority children. Even when children are not participating actively or verbally, this should not be simply interpreted as a lack of social and linguistic competence. For example, Yongjae, who was often a “bystander” in play, and the Min siblings (Boyong and Wonkyu), who rarely interacted with other children verbally, indeed were engaged in peer interaction by positioning their bodies near peers and by being silent. In this sense, careful attention to children’s non-verbal interaction is another important area for future research.

Children’s peer culture can and should be examined in multiple contexts. Although some researchers have made such efforts (e.g., Corsaro, 1994; Corsaro & Nelson, 2003), there are still very few studies on how bilingual and bicultural children construct their peer culture. Examining these children’s peer culture in diverse contexts (e.g., formal and informal educational institutions, home) will allow us to better understand how cultural and linguistic minority children construct and negotiate their social and cultural realities with peers. As I attempted in this study, focusing on how the macro level (e.g., the traditional Korean culture) and micro level
(e.g., children’s peer culture) contexts interact with each other will provide educators with useful insights into how cultural and linguistic minority children experience and negotiate different and often conflicting values and practices across multiple contexts, and how to promote these children’s smooth transition into and competence within the school.

Doing research on and with young children in natural settings is challenging. In their discussion of methods for studying children, Christensen and James (2000) suggested:

As in all research, what is important is that the particular methods chosen for a piece of research should be appropriate for the people involved in the study, its social and cultural context and the kinds of research questions that have been posed. (p. 2)

As these authors stated, choosing appropriate methods for listening to and representing children’s marginalized voices (O’ Kane, 2000) is critical, and varies depending on cultural context.

While conducting this study, I had to adjust my researcher position in order to gain access to the participant children’s world. Although I initially tried to adopt Corsaro’s (1985) reactive entry strategy, Korean cultural beliefs and practices related to interactions between the adults and children led me to reassess the suggested method (see Chapter 3). Considering the fact that I entered the classroom with the name of “Ea-Mo (aunt)” or “Unni (sister)” in order to negotiate my role as a researcher, how a researcher addresses participants, is addressed by participants, or identifies himself or herself, also relates to naming practices. However, the naming practices between a researcher and participants are often taken-for-granted or disregarded in the literature of research methodology in both adult and child studies. Through the examination of naming practices, a researcher can deeply reflect on his or her own positions and adjust them if necessary. In addition, a researcher can consider his or her positionality, even while writing field notes. As
noted in Chapter 5, I did not know how children’s names written in my field notes (e.g., “JH” as Joohee, “PL” as Junsung) reflected the adults’ naming patterns until I analyzed the data. I hope future researchers pay careful attention to naming practices between a researcher and participants in the context of each study.

Researchers studying cultural and linguistic minority children should carefully reexamine research methods developed with European-American middle-class children in order to design culturally relevant methods meaningful to the particular cultural group being studied. In relation to research methods, I also argue that diverse ways of data collection need to be utilized for studying young children’s peer relations. Traditionally, most researchers studying children’s peer relations have used sociometric methods (Kindermann, 2003), which focus on likeability or nomination scales by asking children who their favorite friends are or whom they want to play with. The validity of these data, however, relies on the truthfulness of the children’s self-reporting. In addition, some have raised concerns about the use of negative peer nomination (e.g., who would you least like to play with you?) and its ethical implications (Chan & Mpofu, 2001). Although such traditional research methods may provide us with some insights into children’s peer culture, it is difficult to fully capture children’s micro interactions through the use of these methods alone. In this study, I focused on observing children’s naming practices and informally interviewing the children about them as an alternative avenue for understanding children’s peer relations. I hope that future research can examine many other taken-for-granted areas in children’s lives by experimenting with creative methods that can help us better see and listen to children.

This study has several limitations. As in many ethnographic studies, studying a small number of participants attending a heritage language school in a specific region may not
represent the experience of all Korean-American children. I would like to note here that
generalization was not my goal. Instead, I wanted to understand the lived experiences of the
participant children living in a particular location in a particular sociohistorical context.

Graue and Walsh (1998) discussed how video recordings and photos could be useful
tools when combined with interviewing children. Recording what children say and do during the
interview and then replaying the recording to the children helps the researcher gather additional
information from the children through this review process, allowing his or her to confirm or
modify his or her own interpretation of the data. For example, Corsaro (1985) showed video
recordings to children for *indefinite triangulation*, “a procedure in which the researcher creates
circumstances so that respondents can react to information obtained on a previous occasion” (p.
140). Through this process, Corsaro was able to hear the children’s own interpretations of the
events recorded. Similarly, Tobin, Wu, and Davidson (1988) showed their video recordings to
the participant children, teachers and parents in their study. The multi-vocal responses allowed
these researchers to hear different voices and perspectives about the same recorded incidents.
Although my original plan included showing video recordings to the participant children as
Corsaro (1985) and Tobin et al. (1988) did, due to the constrained timeframe and difficulty in
setting up schedules and places for the review sessions, I was not able to utilize this valuable
process. I have noticed that, despite the emphasis on children’s perspectives in the literature on
children’s peer cultures and peer interactions, triangulation and member checks with participant
children have been rarely mentioned. Considering this irony, I plan to invite children to share
their own insights into the recorded incidents in my future research, and I would encourage other
early childhood researchers to consider this in their research as well.
Corsaro (2003) noted, “Ethnographies of young children are rare, and most have been conducted in a limited range of space and time, usually in a single setting over a one-year period at most” (p. x). Indeed, this study was limited in terms of time (e.g., classes met once a week, data collection took place over one academic year) and space (e.g., a Korean heritage language school). I hope that future research can be conducted over a substantial period of time and in various settings in order to capture the dynamic and changing values and practices developed and shared by children. A longitudinal ethnographic study may well help us better understand the relation between children’s peer culture and their identity development.

Finally, I would like to close this study by sharing my wish that we, as adults, appreciate childhood. Traditionally, children have received attention from the dominant developmental perspective only in relation to their preparation for adulthood (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998). Graue (1993) noted that contemporary early childhood education tends to focus on readiness for the next stage, losing the appreciation for children’s lives here and now: “More and more, the kindergarten program of today incorporates the content of the first grade of yesterday. Less time is spent on socialization activities, in play, with blocks and paints and more time on worksheets, teacher-directed activities, and writing” (p. 252). As Corsaro (2003) argued, it is important for adults to “take children and their childhoods seriously” and “resist the typical tendency to ‘look down’ on our children . . . overprotect, undervalue, and even discriminate against them” (p. 194). I hope that my study can contribute to promoting an awareness of the very real value of research that focuses on the lives and voices of young children, particularly those of young children from cultural and linguistic minority groups.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Parental/Guardian Permission Form

I give permission for my child, ____________________________, to take part in a research study titled “Children's Language, Peer relationship, and Identity in a Korean Language School” conducted by Ms. Jinhee Kim investigator, from Elementary and Social Studies Education Department at the University of Georgia (xxx-xxx-xxxx) under the direction of Dr. Kyunghwa Lee (Elementary and Social Studies Education, xxx-xxx-xxxx). I do not have to allow my child to be in this study if I do not want to. My child can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can request to have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can identified as my child’s, removed from the research records or destroyed.

The goal of the study is investigate what values and beliefs Korean/Korean-American children out of regular school contexts share and negotiate among peers, how social and cultural knowledge constructing peer cultures are embedded in peer interactions, how the peer cultures function in their lives, and how the peer cultures are related to values and beliefs in larger cultural contexts.

There are no direct benefits to my child but the findings from this project may provide information on teaching practices for children’s language and for encouraging positive peer relationships.

If I agree to allow my child to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- The researcher will observe my child at the Korean language school/religious education school and record my child’s interactions with teachers and other students for 3 hours per week for a total of 24 sessions from November 2007 to May 2008.
- The researcher will observe my child in other contexts in which my child interacts with other children (e.g. home, or place for extra curriculum activity) under my consultation twice per month for 1 hour for a total 15 sessions from November 2007 to May 2008.
- Follow ups: If needed, the researcher will observe my child for a total 11 extra sessions from May 2008 to December 2008.
- The researcher will collect photocopies of my child’s work in the classroom.
- The researcher would like to make audio/video recordings of my child during lessons and interactions with other children. The recordings will be used to look for themes and patterns in children’s peer interactions and peer relationships. My child’s name will not be directly linked to either the tapes or the transcription.
- If my child will be the focused student participant, he or she will get a 15 $ bookstore gift card.

The researchers do not foresee any risks to my child for participating in this study, nor do they expect that my child will experience any discomfort or stress. My child can quit at any time. My child’s grade will not be affected if my child decides to stop taking part.

Every attempt will be made to keep my child’s identity confidential. The researcher will not release any identifying information about my child, or provided by my child during the research, unless required by law. Any records relating to my child’s results or participation will be coded and kept in a locked file,
which only the researcher can access. The recordings and the list connecting my name to my results will be destroyed by 2018, but transcripts and field notes will be retained for future analysis.

The researcher will answer any questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: xxx-xxx-xxxx.

I understand the study procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to take part in this study.

____________________            ______________________          ___/____/___
Name of researcher                Signature of researcher                 Date

Telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Email: ____@uga.edu

_____________________          _______________________         ___/____/_____
Name of parent /guardian          Signature of participant                   Date

Please sign both copies of this form, keep one and return the other to the researcher.

Questions or problems regarding my child’s rights as a participant should be addressed to Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-mail Address IRB@uga.edu
APPENDIX B

Consent Form for Parents/Caregivers

Participant Consent Form for Parents/Caregivers: Children's Language, Peer relationship, and Identity in a Korean Language School

I, _____________________, agree to take part in a research study titled, “Children's Language, Peer Relationship, and Identity in a Korean Language School” conducted by Ms. Jinhee Kim investigator, from Elementary and Social Studies Education Department at the University of Georgia (xxx-xxx-xxxx) under the direction of Dr. Kyunghwa Lee (Department of Elementary and Social Studies Education, xxx-xxx-xxxx).

My participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can request to have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, removed from the research records or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to investigate what values and beliefs Korean/Korean-American children share and negotiate among peers, how social and cultural knowledge constructing peer cultures are embedded in peer interactions, how the peer cultures function in their lives, and how the peer cultures are related to values and beliefs in larger cultural contexts.

There will be no direct benefits for me but the findings from this project may provide information on teaching practices for children’s language and for encouraging positive peer relationships. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

• Participate in two-three interviews. The interviews will last about 30-60 minutes and will take place in a comfortable time and place for me from November 2007 to May 2008.
• Follow ups: If needed, participate in additional one-two interviews from May 2008 to December 2008.
• The researcher would also like to audiotape and transcribe the interviews. My name will not be directly linked to either the tapes or the transcription.
• The researcher does not foresee any risks to me for participating in this study, nor does she expect that I will experience any discomfort or stress.

The researcher will keep my identity confidential. No identifying information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others, unless required by law. Any records relating to my results or participation will be kept in a locked file, which only the researcher can access. The recordings and the list connecting my name to my results will be destroyed by 2018, but transcripts and field notes will be retained for future analysis. The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project (xxx-xxx-xxxx).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signing this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

_________________________       ___________________           ___/____/___
Name of researcher                  Signature of researcher            Date
Please sign both copies, keep on and return one to the researcher.

Questions or problems regarding your child’s rights as a participant should be addressed to Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-mail Address IRB@uga.edu
APPENDIX C

Consent Form for Teachers

Participant Consent Form for Teachers: Children's Language, Peer relationship, and Identity in a Korean Language School

I, _____________________, agree to take part in a research study titled, “Children's Language, Peer Relationship, and Identity in a Korean Language School” conducted by Ms. Jinhee Kim investigator, from Elementary and Social Studies Education Department at the University of Georgia (xxx-xxx-xxxx) under the direction of Dr. Kyunghwa Lee (Department of Elementary and Social Studies Education, xxx-xxx-xxxx).

My participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can request to have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, removed from the research records or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to investigate what values and beliefs Korean/Korean-American children out of regular school context share and negotiate among peers, how social and cultural knowledge constructing peer cultures are embedded in peer interactions, how the peer cultures function in their lives, and how the peer cultures are related to values and beliefs in larger cultural contexts. There will be no direct benefits for me but the findings from this project may provide information on teaching practices for children’s language and for encouraging positive peer relationships. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

• Allow the researcher to observe my classroom and record my interactions with students and other teachers for classroom hours on Sunday for a total of 24 sessions from November 2007 to May 2008.
• Follow ups: If needed, allow the researcher to observe my classroom and record my interactions with the students and other students for 11 sessions from May 2008 to December 2008.
• Participate in two-three interviews. The interviews will last about 30-60 minutes and will take place in a comfortable time and place for me.
• Allow the researcher to collect photocopies of children’s work in the classroom.

The researcher would like to make audio and video recordings of my lessons and interactions with children in the classroom. The researcher will use the tapes to look for themes and patterns in children’s peer interactions and peer relationships. The researcher would also like to audiotape and transcribe the interviews. My name will not be directly linked to either the tapes or the transcription.

The researcher does not foresee any risks to me for participating in this study, nor do they expect that I will experience any discomfort or stress.

The researcher will keep my identity confidential. No identifying information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others, unless required by law. Any records relating to my results or participation will be kept in a locked file, which only the researcher can access. The recordings and the list connecting my name to my results will be destroyed by 2018, but transcripts and field notes will be retained for future analysis.
The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project (xxx-xxx-xxxx).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signing this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

_________________________________       ___________________           ___/____/___
Name of researcher                  Signature of researcher            Date

_________________________________ __________________            ___ /_____/____
Name of participant     Signature of participant           Date

Please sign both copies, keep on and return one to the researcher.

Questions or problems regarding your child’s rights as a participant should be addressed to Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-mail Address IRB@uga.edu
APPENDIX D

Consent Form for School Staff Members

Participant Consent Form for School Staff: Children's Language, Peer relationship, and Identity in a Korean Language School

I, _____________________, agree to take part in a research study titled, “Children's Language, Peer Relationship, and Identity in a Korean Language School” conducted by Ms. Jinhee Kim investigator, from Elementary and Social Studies Education Department at the University of Georgia (xxx-xxx-xxxx) under the direction of Dr. Kyunghwa Lee (Department of Elementary and Social Studies Education, xxx-xxx-xxxx).

My participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can request to have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, removed from the research records or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to investigate what values and beliefs Korean/Korean-American children share and negotiate among peers, how social and cultural knowledge constructing peer cultures are embedded in peer interactions, how the peer cultures function in their lives, and how the peer cultures are related to values and beliefs in larger cultural contexts.

There will be no direct benefits for me but the findings from this project may provide information on teaching practices for children’s language and for encouraging positive peer relationships. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

• Participate in two-three interviews. The interviews will last about 30-60 minutes and will take place in a comfortable time and place for me from November 2007 to May 2008.
• Follow ups: If needed, participate in additional one-two interviews from May 2008 to December 2008.
• The researcher would also like to audiotape and transcribe the interviews. My name will not be directly linked to either the tapes or the transcription.
• The researcher does not foresee any risks to me for participating in this study, nor do they expect that I will experience any discomfort or stress.

The researcher will keep my identity confidential. No identifying information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others, unless required by law. Any records relating to my results or participation will be kept in a locked file, which only the researcher can access. The recordings and the list connecting my name to my results will be destroyed by 2018, but transcripts and field notes will be retained for future analysis. The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project (xxx-xxx-xxxx).

I understand that I am agreeing by my signing this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

_____________________________       ___________________           ___/____/___
Name of researcher                  Signature of researcher            Date
Name of participant    Signature of participant    Date

Please sign both copies, keep on and return one to the researcher.

Questions or problems regarding your child’s rights as a participant should be addressed to Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-mail Address IRB@uga.edu
Dear Parents/Caregivers,
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to understand Korean/Korean-American children at a Korean language school as an informal school context; what values and beliefs the children share and negotiate among peer groups, how social and cultural knowledge constructing peer cultures are embedded in peer interactions, how the peer cultures function in their lives, and how the peer cultures are related to values and beliefs in larger cultural contexts. As parents who know your children the best, I would like to invite you to share your insight into your children’s experiences in the heritage language program. The consent letter in the next page explains more details about this research.

If you are interested in my research, please join a meeting on November 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m., at Social Room of the Church. You are invited to freely ask your questions and raise any concerns regarding the research.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jinhee Kim
Doctoral Student
Department of Elementary and Social Studies Education
University of Georgia, Athens
APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol for Caregivers

Questions to probe the caregiver about herself and her family background information
- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your involvement in St. Clare Church (e.g., how did you start to attend this church? Are you involved in any church activities?).
- Tell me about when you immigrated to the United States (e.g., how long have you been in the United States?).
- Tell me about your initial or ongoing experiences regarding cultural adjustments to the United States.
- Tell me about language use in your home among family members.

Questions to probe for general information about the child
- Tell me about your child’s daily routines (weekdays and weekends).
- Tell me about what your child does after school.
- Tell me about your child’s typical school and after school play groups (e.g., who does he or she mainly play with at school and after school?).
- Does your child have any close friends at the heritage language school? Which child’s caregivers at the heritage language school do you frequently have contact with?
- What personality does your child have (e.g., please describe your child’s personality)?
- Tell me about your child’s language use and proficiency.

Questions to probe the child and caregiver’s experiences regarding cultural differences in formal school systems
- When did your child begin to attend an institution (e.g., daycare center, pre-kindergarten)?
- Tell me about your experiences as a caregiver when he or she started to attend the first institution (e.g., did you have any concerns and difficulties about transition from home to school?).
- Regarding cultural differences, tell me about your experiences as an immigrant caregiver when your child attended the formal school.
- Do you think your child has experienced or is experiencing difficulties in her or his transition from home to school? If so, what was (is) that like? Tell me about your child’s school transition experiences regarding a culture at home different from that of the school.
- Have you noticed your child’s awareness about different cultures between home and school through his or her behaviors or verbal language?

Questions to probe caregivers’ perspectives on the heritage language school
- Why do you send your child to the heritage language school?
- Tell me about your perspective on maintaining your child’s heritage language.
• What do you expect from the heritage language school for your child?

Questions to probe concerning children’s names and naming practices
• Tell me about how your child’s name was chosen.
• Tell me about meanings that your child’s name holds.
• Tell me about your child’s naming practices at home and in other contexts.
• Tell me about your own and your child’s particular experiences regarding names in the United States.
APPENDIX G

Interview Protocol for Teachers

Questions to probe a teacher’s general background information
  • Tell me about yourself.
  • Tell me about what makes you serve as a teacher in the program.

Questions to probe about the class curriculum
  • Tell me about what you focus on in the curriculum that is specifically for the children as Korean-Americans (e.g., what do you want children to learn in the class?).
  • Regarding differences between the program and a formal school setting, what is difficult for you in teaching children?
  • Tell me about your own language use in the class.

Questions to probe about child participants from a teacher’s perspective
  • Tell me about children’s language use and proficiency in the class.
  • Tell me about children’s peer relations (e.g., who mainly plays with whom?).
  • Tell me about your perspectives on how different cultures and languages influence the children’s peer interactions in the class.

Questions to probe for a teacher’s perspective on the program
  • Tell me about your perspective on how the program influences the children.
  • What would parents expect from the program?
  • What do you expect from and for parents?
  • What do you expect for children?
APPENDIX H

Interview Protocol for School Staff Members

Heritage Language School Director

Questions to probe a school director’s general background information
- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your roles as the school director.

Questions to probe the roles of the St. Clare Church and the programs supported by the church
- Tell me about the general demographics of parishioners attending the church and the school.
- Tell me about how the church functions regarding Korean immigrants and their children.
- Tell me about the roles of the school for Korean-American children.
- What would parents expect from and for the school? Tell me about your opinions.
- Tell me about your perspective on maintaining one’s heritage language and culture.
- Tell me about your observations about Korean-American children’s experience of cultural conflicts at the church and the heritage language school.

Heritage Language School Coordinator

Questions to probe about the school coordinator’s general background information
- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about what makes you serve as a school coordinator in the program.
- Tell me about your roles as the school coordinator.

Questions to probe for general school information
- Tell me about the history of school.
- Tell me about details of the school organization (e.g., the size of the school, school fee, etc.).
- Tell me about the academic curriculum in general and the pre-kindergarten class in particular.
- Tell me about the textbooks and materials used in the program.
- Tell me about who the teachers are and how they are recruited.

Questions to probe for the school coordinator’s perspective on the program
- Tell me about the roles of the school for Korean-American children.
- Tell me about your expectations for parents and children.
APPENDIX I

Transcription Conventions

…: omitted text from the original transcribed data

[    ]: added text to clarify for the reader

(    ): indication of behavior or facial expression

___: emphasized tone of the participants

Italics: Korean utterances by the participants or a researcher
# APPENDIX J

## Caregivers as Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver(s)</th>
<th>The first time to live in U.S.</th>
<th>Years of U.S. Residency</th>
<th>Parents’ Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyonmin Cho</td>
<td>10th grader</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>After marriage in her 30s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yongjae Choi</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>After marriage in her late 20s</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seonil Jang</td>
<td>Graduate student</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soojung Kim</td>
<td>Before 5th grader, she lived in the U.S. After her marriage, she immigrated to U.S again.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joohee (Michelle) Lee</td>
<td>1 years old</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>After her marriage in her late 20s</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica (Joohee) Lee</td>
<td>2 years old</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>In her 20s</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyong/Wonkyu Min</td>
<td>No information</td>
<td>No information</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>No information</td>
<td>No information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>No information</td>
<td>No information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyuwon Oh</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>After his son divorce, in her 60s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Housewife (but beginning her work in Fall 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>After his son divorce, in her 60s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junsung Park</td>
<td>12th grader</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Business (but stopping her work in Fall 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>College student</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myungwoo Shon</td>
<td>2nd grader</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>After her marriage in her late 20s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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