Beginning in the early 1990s, Latino immigrants began arriving in areas of the United States previously unaccustomed to their presence. Subsequent backlash has included anti-immigrant legislation affecting both “documented” and “undocumented” Latinos. Focusing on one such instance in a rural community located in southeast Georgia, the present ethnographic case study explores what happens when a poultry processing plant recruits a second immigrant group as a source of cheap labor. Starting in 2006, dozens of Korean immigrants began working at Claxton Poultry in Evans, County Georgia. This study looks at the factors influencing the Koreans’ decisions to immigrate to Georgia, the local community’s reaction to their arrival, and the implications for education in the area.
EVOLUTION OF A KOREAN SOCIAL NETWORK IN SOUTH GEORGIA: BRIDGES AND GAPS IN SOCIAL CAPITAL

by

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EVOLUTION OF A KOREAN SOCIAL NETWORK IN SOUTH GEORGIA:
BRIDGES AND GAPS IN SOCIAL CAPITAL

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Sun-A Lee, without whose love and patience it could never have been written. To my mother, Kathy Lynn, who brought me into this world and nurtured me. To my brother, Ashley Lynn, who has always been with me on my journey through life. And to my grandmother, Dorothy Galbreath, whose smile never fails to bring one of my own. *Vos omnes amo.*
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Entry Vignette

From Statesboro, it is a thirty-minute drive south down highway 301 to Claxton Poultry. There is nothing but farmland and forest once you pass over Interstate 16. The fields lie fallow in the winter and with no leaves on the trees, the view is quite bleak. However, the blooms of dogwoods and the deep green of onion fields make the drive picturesque in the spring. The blacktop road has been recently repaved and is has four lanes due to the volume of traffic between the two towns. There is a trailer park and a liquor store just over the Evans County line. Bulloch County is a “dry” county and every road entering an adjacent county has liquor stores that do extraordinary business. After crossing the Canoochee River Bridge, the entrance to the Claxton Poultry parking lot is on the left. A chain-link fence about 10 feet high surrounds the plant. However, the gates are never closed. Unlike every other business in this small town, operations at Claxton Poultry never stop.

This study is the culmination of many different events: some directly related to my life, some far from my control. Having grown up in south Georgia during the 1970s and 80s, I witnessed first hand the most recent transformation of the region. From a biracial population struggling with the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement to a patchwork of multiethnic communities, I have been spectator and participant in this
transformation. Equally, I have changed. Having served in the United States Air Force and Peace Corps, my worldview is atypical of the average citizen of south Georgia. After many years of traveling, learning Spanish and Portuguese, and nearing the end of my doctoral studies, I often feel out of place in the region where I grew up. As such, it has been interesting to document the stories of Korean immigrants who are coming to live, albeit for a short time, in Statesboro, Georgia. While their motivations for immigrating are similar to most other immigrant groups (e.g. job opportunities and better education for their children), the Korean immigrants in Statesboro have revealed themselves to be unique in many ways. Specifically, in this study I examine the social networks of the Korean immigrants in Statesboro, Georgia and how they function in relation to their lives as newcomer immigrants and their children’s education.

**Problem Statement**

**Why Rural South Georgia?**

Shifts in the population demographics of the United States have been rapid in the past decade. No other region has seen more change than the South. Sizeable Latino populations have emerged suddenly in communities that had remained strictly biracial for hundreds of years; “In a mere 35 years, White students will be a minority in every category of public education as we know it today” (Garcia, E., & Cuellar, D., 2006, p. 2220). In a region where many still struggle with the remnants of the Civil War and as well as the Civil Rights Movement, the sudden change has not come easily. Teacher education programs in the South do not offer bilingual education licenses, nor do they provide more than a cursory introduction about educating English Language Learners and immigrant students to preservice and in-service teachers (Ballantyne, 2008; Menken &
Antunez, 2001). The presence of a growing Korean population in Statesboro, Georgia adds an additional twist to the immigration question in the South. What happens when a fourth minority group enters the region?

**Why Social Networks?**

Theorists studying social capital theory and cumulative causation have concluded that an individual’s likelihood of migrating is increased if they are related to someone with prior migrating experience or connected to someone in the destination community (Massey et al., 1998). It is assumed that social networks already in place help facilitate such moves, aiding in the ease of adaptation into a new culture as well as reducing costs. An understanding of how immigrant social networks form is contingent upon recognizing how those within the networks share information (Garcia, 2005). Several researchers have explored how social capital is transmitted within a common social network (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995). However, as Garcia (2005) points out, what is often overlooked in the literature is how such social networks that support immigration emerge and develop.

**Purpose of the Study**

The Korean population in Statesboro, Georgia started in 2005 and grew rapidly after the Claxton Poultry processing plant began a program providing permanent residency to Koreans willing to work for one year. The deal with Claxton Poultry provides permanent residency for not only those working at the plant, but their families as well. As such, multiple families have enrolled their children in the public school system of Bulloch County since families began arriving in 2005. This ethnographic case study explores the development and function of the social networks of Korean
immigrants in Statesboro. Of particular interest to me is how the Korean newcomers negotiate schooling in their new host community.

**Research Questions**

In order to find out more about the formation and function of the social networks of Korean immigrants in Statesboro, I used the following guiding questions:

1. How does the church function in the Korean immigrant community in Statesboro, Georgia?
   - What social and community services do Korean immigrants draw upon at church?
   - What role do these networks play?
   - What are the implications for existing theories of church-based immigrant social capital?

2. How are the policies and practices of schooling in Statesboro perceived and constructed by Korean newcomers?
   - What do Korean parents think they know about U.S. schools upon arrival?
   - What types of information do Korean parents perceive receiving about schooling?
   - How do Korean parents make sense of this information?
   - How does this knowledge influence the way they negotiate schooling?
   - How do they act upon their views?

**Significance**

The passage of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965 permitted the emergence of a more heterogeneous immigrant population in the United States. With the rise in immigrants
from Asia and Latin America have come new challenges for educators in public schools. However, despite the challenges the fields of multicultural education, bilingual education, and English for Speakers of Other Languages have failed to adequately address the needs of these new students. In many areas of the country, teacher preparatory programs fail to adequately prepare educators for the reality of what they will encounter in the classroom. This holds especially true for non-traditional host communities unaccustomed to English language learners.

Unfortunately, some of the states experiencing the sharpest rise in immigrant populations also oppose bilingual education and choose to adopt English-only approaches. The majority of the attention surrounding this debate is focused upon Spanish-speaking Latino students. However, states such as Georgia are seeing a rise in immigrants from non-Spanish speaking countries as well. And just as the terms Latino and Hispanic fail to account for inter-group differences, “Asian” is a monolithic moniker that does not differentiate between the multiple ethnic groups and languages lumped into the category.

Because Koreans have become academically successful in the United States as a whole, they have not been identified as a group that warrants study. In fact, Korean Americans are one of the least studied ethnic groups in the United States. And though the majority of Korean parents are extremely concerned with their children’s education, uncertainty on the part of educators about how to encourage Korean parents to become more active in schools persist. An understanding of the formation and function of social networks in Korean immigrant communities is key to fostering such participation.
In sum, this study provides two items crucial to immigrant education. First, it reveals the inner-workings of social networks in a Korean immigrant community. This information is vital for formulating strategies to get Korean parents more involved in their children’s schools. Second, this study also opens possibilities for meaningful engagement with and among other ethnic groups as well. Cultural sensitivity toward one immigrant population invites transformative conduct that can benefit all educators and children.

**Organization of Chapters**

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the current literature on social capital in immigrant social networks. Additionally, a history of Korean immigration in the United States is provided with an additional examination of the contexts of reception. The chapter also explains the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of Korean immigrants in the United States.

Chapter 3 presents details of the research design as well as steps followed during fieldwork and analysis. In this chapter, I also describe the role of the researcher and methodological challenges encountered during the research process.

Chapter 4 details the sending and receiving communities associated with this study. The chapter gives a history of the economic factors in Korea and the United States that influenced the group’s emigration to Statesboro. The nature of the agreement between Claxton Poultry, Kukjei Immigration Development Corporation (KIDC) and the United States Department of Labor is explored. And lastly, the receiving school district in Bulloch County is described.
Chapter 5 highlights the Korean social networks in Statesboro. The Korean ethnic church in Statesboro is pivotal to the Korean immigrant social networks. The church’s role as a hub for the exchange of social capital is provided as well as a critique of this phenomenon.

Chapter 6 examines the Korean parents’ conception of education in Korea as well as the United States. This chapter explains how the search for quality education is a part of their motivations for immigrating. However, other factors influence their decisions as well.

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the findings. I make call for reconsideration of the current conception of immigrants in non-traditional host communities. The chapter also provides implications for educational researchers, limitations of the study, and areas for future research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

In this chapter I lay the foundation for this dissertation study of the experience of Korean immigrant poultry workers in one southeastern rural town. I begin with an examination of theories of social capital and social networks in immigrant communities. I then provide an overview of recent Korean immigration to the U.S.

Social Capital in Immigrant Social Networks

Although use of the concept of social capital is relatively new to the social sciences, Hanifan (1916) coined the term within the context of community involvement in a successful schooling system. It is well established in the migration literature that interpersonal networks are a source of social capital (Espinosa & Massey, 1999). However, when the concept of immigrant social networks is used in relation to the term social capital, it is often wrongly assumed that the former will automatically result in the later (Akcpar, 2009). My aim in this chapter is to review the literature on social capital with the intent of identifying aspects of the concept that are vital for the arguments made later in the dissertation when I examine whether these hypothesized roles of social networks operate in the case of Korean poultry workers in Statesboro. I ask whether ties with other social networks (e.g. Korean faculty members at Georgia Southern University, Korean students at Georgia Southern University, and long-term Korean immigrants) provide additional social capital not available within their church network. The following section provides a theoretical base for social capital as it functions in social networks and
reviews current research on the topic to serve as a foundation for this study’s analysis of Korean social networks in Statesboro.

**Theories of Social Capital**

Numerous theorists have defined social capital in various ways over the past three decades and it has been located at the level of the individual, the informal social group, the formal organization, the community, the ethnic group, and even the nation (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1995; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999). Much of the current interest can be traced to one of three sources: Pierre Bourdieu (1986), James Coleman (1988), and Robert Putnam (1996). While Bourdieu is credited with the initial systematic analysis of the concept, each of the authors provide definitions of social capital with significantly different meanings and implications that follow (Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 1998).

Bourdieu’s (1986) conception of social capital includes three forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social. Economic capital includes monetary and physical resources. Cultural capital refers to investments on the part of the dominant class in reproducing a set of symbols and meanings, which are misrecognized and internalized by the dominant class as their own. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 248). There are two elements: first, social relationships that allow individuals to claim access to resources embedded in social relations; second, the amount and quality of those resources (Portes, 1998). Under certain conditions, social capital can be converted to economic capital. However, because social capital is a form of capital possessed by the
collective, the volume of social capital a person possesses or is able to obtain depends on “the size of one’s connections and on the volume or amount of capital in these connections’ possession” (Lin, 2001, p. 22). Accordingly, for Bourdieu, social capital is a “collective asset” the endows members with credits, and it represents “the investment of the members in the dominant class engaging in mutual recognition and acknowledgement so as to maintain and reproduce group solidarity and preserve the group’s dominant position” (Lin, p. 27).

Crucial to Bourdieu’s concept of social capital are the notions of field (social field) and habitus. Field is a geographical/mathematical metaphor for the hierarchy of individuals in society: “a multidimensional social space whose axes are represented by the various forms of capital and a person’s relative position in that space is determined by her or his basket of capital” (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 431). Bourdieu believes that all human actions take place within social fields that are arenas for the struggle over resource (Everett, 2002). Habitus refers to one’s encoded beliefs or dispositions that guide how one behaves or acts in the world. It is formed through one’s experiences, one’s position and movement in the social world and is embedded through history and memory. An individual’s social practices and experiences reinforce or modify habitus. And although habitus is an integral part of an individual, “it is fashioned by the structures of the social world she or he exists in” (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 431). One can become conscious of habitus if exposed to different ideologies or when habitus no longer fits within the existing context (Topper, 2001).

While Bourdieu’s concept of social capital tends to focus on inequalities in the accumulation and expenditure of capital, Coleman (1988)’s definition tends to stress
social capital as public good. He defines social capital by its function as “a variety of
different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social
structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors—whether persons or corporate
actors—within the structure” (p. 98). Coleman views collective assets and features as
available to all members of the group regardless of which members actually promote,
sustain or contribute to such resources. Because capital is a public good, it depends on the
good will of the individual members to contribute social capital and not be freeloaders
(Lin, 1999). Norms, trust, sanctions, authority and other structural “features” therefore
become important in sustaining social capital. Coleman proposed that three forms of
social capital can be useful resources for actors to further their interests in social
relations: (a) obligations and expectations embedded in trustworthiness of structure, (b)
information channels, and (c) norms and sanctions that contribute to the common good.
While Coleman’s view stresses that all social relations have the potential to produce
social capital, certain kinds of social structures are more able than others to facilitate
forms of social capital beneficial to actors.

Coleman also emphasizes the roles of parents and communities in the
development of social capital for the next generation. He believes that social capital is
embedded in close parent-child relationships that allow the financial and human capital of
parents to be transferred to children. The social capital of a dense community also
effectively exerts social control through norms and sanctions (Coleman, 1988; Coleman
& Hoffer, 1987). Scholars in educational studies are particularly drawn to Coleman’s
concept of social capital due to his focus on family and community based capital (Dika &
Singh, 2002).
Drawing in part on Coleman’s work, Putnam forwards a concept of social capital as representing the features of social life, networks, norms, and trust. His theory of social capital presumes that generally speaking, the more an individual connects with other people, the more is their mutual trust (Putnam, 1996). Accordingly, the assumption is that more social capital is always better. However, Putnam’s assumption can be dangerous because it ignores social capital’s repressive dimensions (Aguilar & Sen, 2009). For example, growing control over the produce business by Korean immigrants in several East Coast cities could be regarded as excluding immigrants of other ethnicities from owning similar establishments. The same social relations and networks that help Korean immigrants succeed in the grocery business prohibit outsiders from doing the same (Hawe & Shiell, 2000). Literature on ethnic entrepreneurship by Portes and Landolt (1996) as well as Woolcock (1998) further shows how social capital can place a heavy burden on group members.

According to Wakefield and Poland (2005), the distinctions among theorists lie in their preferred unit of analysis. Bourdieu theorizes about the individual consequences and effects of social capital, while Coleman and Putnam examine social capital from a broader, global perspective that result in “a communitarian or institutional understanding of the effects of social capital” (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 426). Woolcock (2010) attests that with the multiple interpretations of the concept, social capital belongs to the category of “essentially contested concepts” (p. 470). However, arguing that social capital is an essentially contested concept does not absolve individual users of the requirement to be precise in articulating their particular definition, theoretical moorings, and empirical referents (p. 471). As such, below I will explain the definition of social capital adopted
for the purposes of this dissertation. The utility of the concept will become evident in later chapters, as social capital plays an indispensable role in the lives of the Korean immigrants in Statesboro.

A network theory of social capital. Moody and Paxton (2009) suggest that considering the consistent growth of research aimed at both social capital and social networks, it would be fruitful to combine the two. Their survey of the literature found that while relatively few articles on social networks explicitly mention social capital, those that did were focused on community. Moody and Paxton argue that a promising place for bridging across the literatures is to combine the structure of networks with the content of social capital to “better model the substantive outcomes of interest to both” (p. 1494). Considering the importance of social networks in the Korean immigrant communities of the US, I feel that such an approach is pertinent.

Key concepts associated with a network-based conception of social capital include bonding, bridging and linking social capital. Bonding social capital refers to social networks among homogeneous groups of people such as family or ethnic groups. Bridging social capital refers to social ties among socially heterogeneous groups that differ according to ethnicity, age or class. Linking social capital refers to networks among people who are interacting across defined, formal boundaries in society (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004).

Social network theorists suggest that family, friends, fellow ethnics and religious organizations provide essential information, assistance with housing, employment and social support for new immigrants, while bridging networks connect people from different backgrounds and ethnicities, broadening access to other resources external to the
bonding network (Kunz, 2005). Frith (2005) adds, “Both bonding and bridging capital are important components to an immigrant’s integration cycle….immigrants need to bond in the initial stages of settlement in order to gain confidence and be prepared to take the risk of social bridging” (p. 65). A failure to take the risk of bridging could result in an ethnic enclave that, while strong in intergroup social capital, could remain isolated from the receiving community.

These theorists also suggest that social capital can offset lower human capital constraints through diverse networks. Ties with acquaintances or distant friends, weak ties, as well as social bonds with people who differ in terms of gender, educational level and occupational prestige may allow linkages with other people who possess crucial resources (Lin, 2004). Korean Protestant communities in the US with ties to Anglo worshipers of the same faith are a good example. Faith groups can provide physical resources (for example, buildings) and social networks (for example, interfaith dialogue networks) that facilitate bridging relationships (Furbey et al, 2006). As stated earlier, this dissertation examines whether these hypothesized roles of social networks operate in the case of Korean poultry workers in Statesboro. It asks whether ties with other Korean social networks (e.g. Korean faculty members at Georgia Southern University, Korean students at Georgia Southern University, and long-term Korean immigrants) provide additional social capital not available within their church network.

**Overview of Korean Immigrants**

Having discussed the theoretical perspectives on social capital in immigrant social networks, in this section I provide details of the social and political context of Korean immigration as reported in the literature in order to elucidate the situation of Koreans in
Statesboro. First, I examine the history of Korean immigration to the US. Second, I present their context of reception. Third, I review the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of Korean immigrants in the US. And lastly, I provide an overview of the educational performance and parental involvement of Korean immigrants.

**History of Korean Immigration to the United States**

Discriminatory immigration laws of 1921 and 1924, in addition to the Great Depression and World War II, curtailed the hitherto massive flow of immigrants to the United States. Until the 1930s, the US averaged 560,000 immigrants per year, mostly of European origin. The liberalization of immigration laws in the 1960s accelerated immigration flow once again, ushering in a second mass migration period. The immigration act of 1965 led to a dramatic increase in the number of Asians coming to the US. The 1990s was the decade in which by far the largest number of immigrants (approximately 8.8 million) came to the United States in a ten-year period (Min, 1999).

Korean immigrants make up a large portion of the “new” ethnic Asian population in the United States. Rising from a population of approximately 70,000 in 1970, Koreans numbered close to 1.5 million in 2010 (US Census, 2010). Korean immigrants have maintained strong ethnic attachment and solidarity due to their homogeneity, affiliation with and frequent participation in Korean immigrant churches, and their concentration in small businesses (Min, 2007). Close US-Korean ties, the presence of American forces, and the postgraduate training of many Korean intellectuals in the US contributed to the popularization of American culture and led many middle-class Koreans to view America as “a country of affluence and prosperity” (Min, 2007, p. 493). While the rate of
immigration for Koreans has declined since the 1990s, Korean Americans rank as the fifth largest Asian American population.

Similar to other East Asian immigrant groups in the United States, the new Korean Americans are one of the most highly educated immigrant groups. According to U. S. Census data (2010), 52.7% of all Korean Americans aged 25 years and over have at least a Bachelor’s degree, compared with 27% of European Americans and 48% of Asian Americans. However, a close examination of the data reveals a disjunction between educational attainment and income for Korean Americans. While Asian Americans have household and personal income levels that exceed those of any other racial demographic ($65,637), the median family income for Korean Americans in 2010 was $40,183, while the national median household income was $46,326 (U.S. Census, 2010). These figures support the argument that “contrary to the popular image of Korean Americans as a success story, they have not attained income parity with whites or with other major Asian groups” (Hurh, 1998, p. 53).

Additionally, Korean newcomers often experience occupational downward mobility. Due to language barriers and the insular nature of the Korean American community, many have been unable to transfer their prior work experience and knowledge into the US labor market. For example, a study by Min (1987) found that of small business owners in Atlanta, Georgia, nearly 70% had a college degree and 75% had held white-collar positions or professional occupations prior to immigration. It is therefore not surprising that Korean immigrants see education as the only way up the social ladder for their children. Sue and Okazaki (1990) explain:
Upon arrival in the US, immigrants encounter a relatively open education system and abundant educational opportunities on the one hand, and “blocked” mobility on the other. This reality not only reaffirms their belief in education but also fosters apperception of education as the only possible means for social mobility (p. 17).

The frequency of Korean owned businesses among first generations immigrants described in the following section attests to this belief. Many newcomer Korean immigrants find transferring their education and skills to the U.S. labor market a difficult task.

**Contexts of Reception**

In this section, I examine the context of reception for Korean immigrants in the United States and specifically Georgia. Zhou (1997) states that policies of the receiving country and identified racial status are the key variables of context of reception. While certain policies in the United States such as civil rights legislation and equal employment opportunity laws (Alba & Nee, 2005) have created a positive context of reception that facilitate the hiring of immigrants, other factors have negative connotations for Koreans in Georgia. The Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act, passed in 2006, is one of the country’s most stringent anti-immigration laws (Sabia, 2010), indicating a negative context of reception for non-natives.

Traditional settlement locations for early Koreans immigrants were Los Angeles, New York, Washington, San Francisco, Chicago, and Seattle. However, Georgia is now one of the ten states with the largest Korean American populations. In 2010, an estimated 52,000 Koreans lived in the state. In a region steeped in tradition and slow to embrace
change, the redistribution of race is taking place because of factors well beyond the
control of the local residents. The influences of globalization and the drive for economic
gain combined to create an opening for immigration in the early 1990s. During the
twentieth century the United States as a whole became more interconnected globally, and
the South became a more integral part of the economy. As Bankston (2007) states,
“These two historical developments have stimulated the driving forces of economic
opportunity, transportation, communication, and concentrations of settlement in the
South” (p. 41). Yet, unlike other regions of the United States the rapid influx of
immigrants has affected the New South with greater intensity. Rural, small town,
suburban and big city communities have experienced rapid changes to their populations
in a short amount of time (Kochhar, Suro, & Tafoya, 2005).

Georgia in particular has seen a large increase in its foreign born population. In
1990, Georgia was home to an estimated 173,000 foreign-born residents. The 2000
census listed the total at 577,000. In 2008, the estimated number jumped to 929,285. In
the last ten years, over 1.7 million new residents settled in Georgia. Nearly one-quarter of
these new residents were immigrants. While Mexico is the country of origin for the
majority of these new immigrants, a lesser-discussed growing population in Georgia is
that of Koreans. Of the total immigrant population in Georgia in 2008, 5.0 percent were
born in Korea (Terrazas & Batog, 2010).

Unlike the previous immigrants’ experiences, the post-1965 immigrants not only
come from countries outside of Europe, they also face an American “land of opportunity”
that is both a globalized and post-industrial society. The “hourglass” economy of the US,
with an extremely polarized opportunity structure, is poorly equipped to provide the well-
paid manufacturing jobs that enabled earlier generations of immigrants “shop floor mobility” and a chance at achieve middle-class status (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Today’s immigrants are faced with the option of well-paid, knowledge-intensive industries that allow rapid upward mobility, or poorly paid and uninsured service-sector jobs that demand little skill and knowledge. A failure to gain access to American mainstream society could possibly result in a cycle of downward assimilation and poverty.

**The Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Korean Immigrants in the United States**

Like most immigrants, Koreans come to the United States in search of a life better than what is available in their home country. While an improvement in conditions since the economic troubles on the late 1990s has resulted in a reduction in immigrant figures, Koreans nevertheless continue to move to the United States in large numbers. However, the literature attributes recent immigration to the search for better educational opportunities (Kim, 2010; Kim & Greene, 2003) rather than financial gain. Korea ranks third behind India and China in US international school and college enrollments (59,000 Koreans Studying in US, 2006).

As Min (2007) points out, Korean immigrants’ ethnic attachment and ethnic solidarity distinguish them from all other Asian ethnic groups in the United States. She defines ethnic attachment as “the extent to which members of an ethnic group are culturally, socially, and psychologically integrated with their group” and ethnic solidarity as “the degree to which members use collective actions to protect their common interests” (p. 498). Korean immigrants possess high levels of both traits and the phenomenon can be attributed to three factors: the homogeneity of the group, their high
rate of affiliation with and frequent participation in ethnic religious congregations, and their high concentration in small business (p. 499).

Korean immigrants’ high concentration of small business ownership has been attributed to their unfamiliarity with the US labor market and the language barrier (Min, 2007). Although Korean Americans are one of the most highly educated immigrant groups in the United States (U.S. Census, 2010), many struggle to convert their prior white collar status in Korea to the labor market in the United States. As a result, many first generation Korean Americans choose to run small businesses rather than work for others. Korean immigrants tend toward labor-intensive small businesses such as groceries, fish stories, shops selling manufactured goods imported from Asian countries, dry cleaning and manicure services, as well as liquor stores. Many Koreans also take advantage of their native language skills and connections in Korea to import goods manufactured in Korea—wigs, handbags, clothing, costume jewelry, hats, and shoes (Min, 2007).

As an example of the ability of immigrants to achieve upward mobility, the 2000 Census showed that few native-born Korean Americans were self-employed. Korean Americans experienced a radical intergenerational transition in occupation over the last decade. Native-born Korean Americans underwent occupational assimilation and maintained much lower levels of ethnic attachment and solidarity than their first generation predecessors (Min, 2007), thus perpetuating the idea of “The American Dream”.

**Educational Performance and Parental Involvement of Korean Immigrants**
Coleman’s attention to family- and community-based capital has served as the basis for many of the conceptualizations of social capital in educational studies (Dika & Singh, 2002). Social capital, in the guise of family norms and close intergenerational relations, leads to the development of human capital for the children (Coleman, 1988). In theory, this human capital helps raise their future income by increasing their lifetime earnings. Because Korean immigrant children generally feel a sense of obligation toward their parents due to Confucian ideals, they are thus motivated to succeed in school, as they perceive themselves to be the main reason for the family’s immigration. Equally, Kim (1993) points out that success (defined as educational and financial attainment) for Korean American immigrants is associated with belief in “work-optimism”, the belief that in the United States reward is proportional to effort (p. 224). In many instances, the notion of work-optimism translates into a perpetuation of the “model-minority” moniker (Lee, 1996) associated with the high-achieving Asian student. The children of both Korean and Chinese immigrant groups have shown extraordinary educational achievement in the United States in recent years (Zhou & Kim, 2006).

High academic performance aside, family-school relationships constitute an additional social structure that affects education for immigrant children. The role parents play in their children’s education in the United States has changed over the past 30 years. McGeeney (1969) describes the days when school officials drew a line in the playground that marked the point beyond which parents were not allowed to proceed. The perception that parents are active participants in their children’s education is now the norm. The literature in the field of parent participation indicates that immigrant parents from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds demonstrate less active involvement in
school affairs than their native born counterparts (Edwards & Dandridge, 2001; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003). A study by Lee (2005) reveals that in academic journals and the minds of the general public, minority parents have been labeled as “uncooperative, not caring, and in extreme cases ignorant” (p. 299) when it comes to parent participation, teacher-parent conferences, school events, and volunteer activities in and outside of the classroom.

Following Bourdieu’s (1998) conception of cultural capital, the school serves as an institutionalized structure where the dominant culture’s symbolic values are imposed and reproduced. Immigrant parents from cultures with differing conceptions of education likely differ in terms of educational habitus and possess less of the cultural capital valued by schools in the United States. The parents’ limited knowledge about school culture, combined with the language barrier, result in stymied family-school relationships that in turn compound the reliance on ethnic social networks for support.

Difference in school habitus is another factor possibly affecting immigrant parents’ school involvement. Variation in financial resources, educational knowledge, and experiences with and confidence in the educational system all contribute to parental involvement (Grenfell, James, Hodkinson, Reay, & Robbins, 1998). As Lee (2005) points out, most Korean parents share a deferential orientation towards authority and authority figures. Trusting authority figures, such as teachers and school administrators, is a way of showing support. Additionally, the notion of school as a place where parents come and spend time providing help is a rather new concept to Korean parents.

In an attempt to account for educational outcomes across racial/ethnic groups with regard to parental involvement, a study by Jeynes (2003) reveals that the benefits of
parental involvement were greater for African Americans and Hispanics than they were for Asian Americans. Cultural factors in Asian families such as a reverence for learning, importance of family values and honors, and a strong work ethic act as counterbalances to the otherwise beneficial strategy of parental involvement. In other words, groups from different socioeconomic statuses and ethnic backgrounds are impacted differently when it comes to parental involvement. Immigrant parents with different social and cultural capital than the norm tend to rely upon alternative means in order to ensure the academic success of their children.

**Gaps in the Literature**

Missing from the literature are two issues directly related to this study. First, the majority of the research on immigrant groups today assumes that newcomers move to community with the sole purpose of settling down. This is not the case in Statesboro. The Koreans working at Claxton Poultry have little intention of staying in the area once their one-year contracts end. The result is an immigrant community in flux. The relationships and services that evolve over the course of time with typical immigrant communities do not form due to the short amount of time the Korean immigrants spend in the host community. Equally, matters of education such as parental participation are stymied because the short time frame. Relationships are difficult to build in such short amounts of time. More research on such phenomenon is warranted.

Second, while the mechanisms for the exchange of social capital within social networks is well documented, what is assumed in the literature is that these social networks are in place in immigrant communities. What the literature lacks is a more in depth exploration of how these social networks emerge and develop (Garcia, 2005).
There are not many studies that accomplish this task. In the next section, I discuss the theoretical frameworks that underpin and guide my research questions.

**Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter covered the current literature on Korean immigrants in the United States, the New South, and Georgia produced by contemporary theorists. The United States has seen a shift in the ethnic makeup of immigrants since the 1960s, from mostly European centered countries of origin to more Latino and Asian countries. Of note is the shift away from traditional host communities as well. The subsequent strain on both the immigrants and the host communities calls to attention taken for granted norms of both religious participation and education. The literature shows that immigrant parents often mobilize unconventional means in order to cope with the difficulties of living in an unfamiliar country, with most researchers focusing on the importance of immigrants’ relationships.

Social capital obtained through participation in social networks is an effective conceptualization for surveying the ways in which Korean immigrants cope with immigration and strive to maximize educational outcomes for their children while working for Claxton Poultry. The role of the ethnic church plays as a hub of the immigrant community was highlighted. Grounded theory, as well as its theoretical underpinnings, was focused on as a framework for this study. Using these theoretical foundations, this study explores how Korean immigrants in Statesboro make sense of their situation and strive to make the best of a difficult transition period for both themselves and their school-aged children. While the literature reviewed in this chapter played a significant role in shaping the scope of this dissertation, new dimensions of
social capital were ultimately gleaned from the study of Korean immigrants in Statesboro.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Crotty (2003) attests that the justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that a researcher brings to her or his work. An interpretive view of research believes that the realities of the research setting and the people in it are mysterious and can only be superficially touched by research that tries to make sense. This approach maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret bits of reality (Holliday, 2007, p. 6). Considering that this study explores the form and function of ethnic social networks in relation to societal and educational participation in a rural setting, close examination of the people, activities, and issues within this context drive the methodologies and methods employed. In this chapter, I explain my research design as well as how the study was conducted and data analyzed. Specifically, I outline the following: first, a conceptual framework; second, a research design; third, methods for data collection and analysis; fourth, my role as the researcher, including my subjectivities; and lastly, methodological challenges that became clear during the research process.

Methodological Framework

Qualitative research design should help researchers to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible. Additionally, the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their
social worlds is the primary criterion that guides qualitative research (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). A constructionist epistemology maintains that human beings construct meaning as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998). I used this epistemology as a lens through which to observe and interpret how Korean immigrants in Statesboro interacted within their social networks and constructed meaning. Considering my status as an outsider of the participants of the study, I consider this stance as the most logical. A constructivist approach goes beyond merely looking at how individuals view their situations. It not only theorizes the interpretive work that research participants do, but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation (Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2000, 2002). “The theory depends on the researcher’s view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130).

In this study, I strive to explore the nature of the social networks in the Korean immigrant community as well as their educational experiences in Statesboro, a community in which I live. These immigrants’ perceptions were constructed based upon their native culture and language, their community, social interactions, shared experiences, and interpretations of the world. And it was these elements they used in order to make sense of their collective and individual situations. Grounded theory affords a way to theorize about the way the social networks of the Korean immigrants in Statesboro function. As Charmaz (2006) explains, “Theorizing is a practice. It entails the practical activity of engaging the world of constructing abstract understandings about and within it” (p. 128). What grounded theory offers is a guide to interpretive theoretical practice, not a blueprint for theoretical products.
The actions and interactions of the Korean immigrants in this study were closely observed and interpreted using a grounded theory approach. The term grounded theory does not refer to any particular level of theory, but to a theory that is inductively developed during a study and in constant interaction with the data collected. The theory is “grounded” in the actual data collected (Maxwell, 2005, p. 43). Considering the unique nature of the Korean immigrant population in Statesboro and my status as an outside observer, I felt that grounded theory was the best option for developing a plausible account of the situation at this particular time in history, in this particular town.

As Anafara and Mertz (2006) explain, “Any framework or theory allows the researcher to ‘see’ and understand certain aspects of the phenomenon being studied while concealing other aspects. No theory, or theoretical framework, provides a perfect explanation of what is being studied” (p. xxviii). As such, I will explore the shortcomings of this approach in my subjectivities statement. However, shortcomings notwithstanding, I feel that a grounded theory approach is the most useful option for an ethnographic case study of this nature. Figure 1 shows the four elements that informed my interpretation of the subject matter in this dissertation and how they relate.
Figure 1. Four elements that inform the research processes of this study. Adapted from Crotty (1998).

**Research Design**

Using an ethnographic case study approach, this study examines issues pertaining to social networks of Korean immigrants in the context of a small town in south Georgia. A case study is an approach to research that enables the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources; “This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544).

Because this study aims to better understand the case in order to provide insight into immigrant social networks, an “instrumental case study” (Stake, 2005, p. 445) was adopted in order to offer insight into the issue with the potential of transferring the findings to other settings in mind.

I believe that the particularity and complexity of their unique situation in Statesboro qualifies the Korean poultry worker families as a case worthwhile for study (Stake, 1995). Merriam (1998) states, “the uniqueness of a case study lies not so much in the methods employed (although these are important) as in the questions asked and their relationship to the end product” (p. 14). As such, the following outline of the methods that I intend to use is such that I believe the end result will be “an intensive, holistic description and analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 16) of the experience of Korean immigrant population in Statesboro, Georgia. It is my belief that a case study method is best to capture the “particularity and complexity” (Stake, 1995, p. xi) of their situation.
The importance of the context in this study cannot be understated. It would be impossible for me as a researcher to develop a true picture of the situation in Statesboro without careful consideration of the context in which the events occurred. Great lengths were taken in order to facilitate what Stake and Trumbull (1982) call naturalistic generalizations, wherein conclusions arrived at through my own engagements with the setting are relayed in a manner that allows the reader to feel as if he or she had the same experiences. And while the conclusions made herein are strictly my own, every effort was made to clearly show how those conclusions were constructed. Patton (2002) suggests that research and evaluation should be built on the foundation of a “paradigm of choices” rather than become the handmaiden of any single and inevitably narrow disciplinary or methodological paradigm. With Patton’s advice in mind, I employed ethnographic methods in conjunction with the aforementioned case study approach in order to obtain the “variety of lenses” necessary to flesh out the nature of the situation in Statesboro. Below, I further explain the methods used in this study.

**Ethnography**

The primary challenge for ethnographers is to gain insight into the lives of particular people within particular settings with the aim of understanding social behavior in context and based upon lived experiences (Esterberg, 2002). This study is defined and bound as an ethnographic case study because it intertwines the two approaches in order to design a study that focuses on the influence of place and culture within a specific case for an in-depth study with rich description. The history of both the sending and receiving communities was taken into close consideration as well. “History,” in the words of William Carlos Williams, “that should be a left hand to us, as of a violinist.” To pass over
the underlying forces that both pushed and pulled the Korean immigrants to Statesboro would be to ignore the factors that influenced the participants’ interpretation of the events described here.

Additionally, I chose ethnography because of my beliefs concerning the importance of history. The great historian Howard Zinn (2005) once said:

We were not born critical of existing society. There was a moment in our lives (or a month, or a year) when certain facts appeared before us, startled us, and then caused us to question beliefs that were strongly fixed in our consciousness-embedded there by years of family prejudices, orthodox schooling, imbibing of newspapers, radio, and television. This would seem to lead to a simple conclusion: that we all have an enormous responsibility to bring to the attention of others information they do not have, which has the potential of causing them to rethink long-held ideas (p. 22).

To ignore the underlying economic and political factors influencing the actions of the participants in this dissertation would be to gloss over the overriding motivation for this particular work. I found the situation of the Korean immigrants in Statesboro fascinating particularly because of my knowledge of history. How they came to work at Claxton Poultry in exchange for permanent residency in the United States is as important as what happened to them after arrival. I believe that informing readers of these factors is important for a better understanding of the link between global finance and immigration. Ethnography, in my view, is the best option for intertwining such information into a case study.
Equally, ethnography as a methodology allows the researcher to view the research situation from various angles when coupled with case study (Walters, 2007). Combining the methods produces “triangulation” (Denzin, 1970), adding “rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). The result is a study that balances particularity with thick description. In the following section, I describe the setting and participants, followed by an explanation of methods and analytical strategies.

**Setting and Participants.** Referring to the South in William Faulkner’s (1951) *Absalom! Absalom!* the character Quentin Compson states, “You can’t understand it. You would have to be born there.” I was born in Metter, Georgia, thirty minutes west of Statesboro. I have seen much of the world outside of rural Georgia. Extensive travel and many years of teaching English as a second language have exposed me to a wide range of what the world has to offer. Yet, despite an innate curiosity about all cultures and customs, I feel that the South is the place that I understand best. As such, I feel that I am in a unique position to comment on the situation of the Korean immigrant population in Statesboro. I have been a resident of Bulloch County since 2007. Furthermore, my wife is Korean. This gives me access to the participants in a way that would be difficult for anyone else wanting to study their unique situation. In sum, I have the privilege of existing in both the receiving and immigrating cultures.

Statesboro, Georgia is located in the southeastern part of the state about one hour west of Savannah and the coast. The estimated population in 2010 was 24,604. Georgia Southern University is one of the largest employers in the county. There are 16 public schools and 3 private and parochial schools with a combined 9,826 students (http://www.statesboroga.net). The racial makeup of the city is 53% White, 39.4%
African American, 0.1% Native American, 2.8% Asian, 2.2% Hispanic or Latino, 1.6% from other races, and 3% from two or more races (http://www.census.gov). Claxton Poultry, the employer of the majority of the Korean participants, is located 20 miles south of Statesboro in Claxton, Georgia. Interview evidence suggests that the Korean immigrants see the school district in that town as less favorable. Equally, options for housing are not as plentiful in Claxton. Therefore, the Korean poultry workers live almost exclusively in Statesboro.

**Participants.** The First Baptist Church in Statesboro has an annex where local Korean residents hold their own services in Korean. Figure 1 indicates the proximity of the two locations. On average, attendance is around 25-30 members. A meal always follows services where community members eat and talk about current events. Ages range from infants to elderly. Most members come as a family, although there are a few Korean students from Georgia Southern University. The majority of the members work at the poultry processing plant.
Bulloch County is one of the 13 counties in Georgia authorized to grow the trademarked brand of Vidalia Sweet Onions\(^1\). Prior to the boon in the onion industry, the area was similar to many others in the South. The racial divide was split between Blacks and Whites. Other minority groups were almost non-existent. Migrant farm workers, mostly from Mexico, began arriving to work in the onion fields in the 1980s as farmers began to capitalize on specialization and marketing in an effort to increase profits. The farmers needed cheap labor and the migrant workers were willing to provide it. Xenophobia aside, it was a win-win situation for both parties economically. Many Latino families settled in the region and looked for work outside of the onion fields. Yet, research shows how Latino immigrants in Georgia have continually faced extreme challenges (see Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2001; Sabia, 2010). It appears that the strict enforcement of immigration laws may be influencing some businesses to be more reluctant to hire Latino workers. Whatever the underlying reasons, Koreans are filling many of the vacancies at a local poultry processing plant once held by mainly Latinos.

Since 2005, dozens of Korean families have come to work at Claxton Poultry through a deal that affords permanent residency status in exchange for one year of work. The particulars behind this arrangement are complicated and remain unclear to me due to reluctance on part of both the Korean immigrants and the employer to talk in detail about the contract. The educational and financial situation of the Korean immigrants is quite different than the better-known case of Latino immigrants in the Southeast. The majority of the Korean immigrants arriving in Statesboro leave white-collar jobs and middle-class

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\(^1\) Portions of seven other counties are also permitted by state law to grow Vidalia Onions.
lifestyles in order to come work a poultry-processing job that pays just above minimum wage. Reasons behind their willingness to undertake such hardships are explored later in the study.

Recruitment was conducted through snowball sampling (Patten, 2002). Because my wife and I attend services at the Korean Mission of the First Baptist Church in Statesboro on a regular basis, I was able to ask new members of the Korean Mission with school-aged children if they were willing to be interviewed. They in turn recommended others who might be willing to participate.

In all, 17 Korean parents, 12 mothers and 5 fathers, with children at the kindergarten through twelfth grade levels participated in interviews. Of the 17, 2 couples were interviewed twice based upon the uniqueness of their situation. The first interview with them was conducted as a focus group and one of their children was subsequently held back for a second year of kindergarten. Participants were given a $20 gift certificate to Walmart for the first round of interviews and a $10 gift certificate for all follow-up interviews. Table 3 provides an overview of the participants’ as well as their children’s gender, age and grade level. Participant names were changed to a pseudonym based upon a list of English names from which they could choose.

Table 1

*Description of Korean Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Child’s Gender</th>
<th>Child’s Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>GSU undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the Korean participants, 1 retired school superintendent and 2 Bulloch County teachers were interviewed. Although I met with the current superintendent of Bulloch County schools in an attempt to gain access to classrooms, he declined my request. Additionally, the superintendent did not want me to contact teachers during the school day. The interviews that I arranged were through friends in Statesboro who knew the educators. Additionally, a representative of Claxton Poultry agreed to provide information concerning the number of Korean employees at the plant. However, he declined to be formally interviewed. I contacted him over the phone.
Table 2

Description of non-Korean participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former Superintendent of Bulloch County Schools</td>
<td>Dr. Katy Morris</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Teacher</td>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL Teacher</td>
<td>Mabel</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection and Analysis

Fieldwork started in March of 2010 and lasted into January of 2012. There were several methods of data collection in order to provide “triangulation” (Denzin, 1970): semi-structured interview, focus group, observation, and document analysis. As Stake (2005) explains, triangulation is “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p. 454). However, unlike quantitative research methodologists who strive for results that can be generalized to some larger population, triangulation in this case is “less a strategy for validating results and procedures than an alternative to validation which increases scope, depth and consistency in methodological proceedings” (Flick, 2002, p. 227). Equally, my motivation for using multiple methods was to provide what Geertz (1973) describes as “thick description” in order to fully explain the context of the study.

Interviews

I initially interviewed participants using a semi-structured interview protocol for approximately one hour each (see Appendix A). Each interview session involved a series of guiding questions followed by additional probing questions. The purpose of this type
of protocol was to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee (Kvale, 2007). The interview questions aimed to elicit discussion about the social capital the participants have access to in their social networks as well as how that social capital is used in their perception and construction of policies and practices in Bulloch County schools. Because sensemaking is retrospective (Weick, 1995), my desire was to gather narratives pertaining to the beliefs and assumptions about schooling in the US. Using my knowledge of the local school system, I wanted to guide their thinking towards particular aspects of the process while allowing the interviewees to explore their own interpretation of the events (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). My prior experience as an interviewer helped facilitate this process. Although many of the participants speak English very well, some questions and answers required translation. I made arrangements with fully bilingual Korean-Americans who were willing to help in the interview process. They were well known members of the community. All interviews were electronically recorded and transcribed first in Korean. A fully bilingual Korean later translated the transcription into English. Any areas of confusion were fact checked with the participants. All interviews with school personnel were conducted in their homes. The participants determined the location and time of all interviews.

**Focus groups**

Two couples agreed to be interviewed together as a focus group. The semi-structured interview protocol used for the individual interviews was loosely followed in order to facilitate conversation. The interview was recorded and transcribed in the same manner as the individual interviews as well. The same parents were interviewed again four months later using the focus group format. The semi-structured interview protocol
for the second focus group was based upon answers from the first interview session (see Appendix B).

**Observation**

In addition to the interviews, I attended services and lunches at the Korean Mission on a weekly basis. I also attended birthday parties, barbeques, Christmas celebrations and other social gatherings through the course of my fieldwork. I kept a journal to record my reactions and thoughts during this period. Because of my status as a Caucasian with limited Korean speaking skills, it was easy to remain on the margins of these encounters and remain present without being a full participant (Glesne, 2005).

**Archival Data**

Concurrent to the interviews, I also analyzed newspaper articles and immigration policy documents for a better understanding of the Korean immigrants came to reside in Statesboro. This information was used to contextualize the information gained from the interviews and allow me to better answer questions about what exactly the Korean parents were experiencing. My understanding of the situation and relevant policies was just as important as that of the participants in this aspect. Equally, Fairclough (1992) states, “The news media can be regarded as effecting the ideological work of transmitting the voices of power in a disguised and covert form” (p. 110). By analyzing the existence of such evidence I feel that I was better able to show the juxtaposition of how the receiving educational community discursively constructed the Korean immigrant group while they at the same time tried to make sense of their own situation. Fairclough (2003) also asserts, “…texts have causal effects upon, and contribute to changes in, people
(beliefs, attitudes, etc.), actions, social relations, and the material world” (p 8). It was my desire to shed light on these causal effects.

**Data Analysis**

Data management in qualitative research is an ongoing process (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). I recorded a log of interview transcripts and field notes from observations with comments and reflections as each of these tasks were completed. Afterward, the transcript data was entered and analyzed using MAXQDA software. Data analysis took place in an ongoing and inductive manner. In other words, I reviewed each interview as the transcription was completed. In line with the tenets of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), I began coding with the first transcription, continually comparing data with data, and used the information to direct subsequent data gathering. During coding, I began the memo-writing process, looking for certain codes that stood out. These were used to begin shaping theoretical categories. The emergent theoretical categories dictated the direction of theoretical sampling necessary for the development of emerging theories about the case study. As Charmaz points out, “The acts involved in theorizing foster seeing possibilities, establishing connections, and asking questions” (p. 135, emphasis in original). I comment on the resultant theories in the Chapter 7.

**Role of the Researcher**

Several postcolonial researchers have written about the complications that arise when Western researchers attempt to characterize the situation of Eastern participants. Said (1979) writes of “Orientalism” and the way in which “the West not only constructs the Orient, but constructs it precisely as its Other, the repository of all those characteristics deemed non-Western (and therefore negative)” (Childs & Williams, 1997,
p. 100). Equally, Spivak (1988) warns of the pitfalls that many writers encounter when trying to portray marginalized groups in their writing; “The banality of leftist intellectuals’ lists of self-knowing, politically canny subalterns stands revealed; representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent” (p. 271). It is precisely the transparency of which Spivak writes which I attempted to conscientiously avoid. As an Anglo-American male writing about Korean immigrants, I felt that to do otherwise would have been a disservice to the participants of my study as well as to the validity of my claims.

Rogers (2003) uses the term reflexivity to denote “the examination of the relationship between the researcher and participants” (p. 197). In an attempt to demonstrate how the researcher is implicit in institutional ideologies, she encourages researchers to turn the analytical lens upon themselves. Facilitating such action includes the idea of understanding the worldview of the participants, reciprocity and dialogue, and the idea that research should include critical analysis and sustained action. It has been my intent to follow Rogers’ advice. The embedded nature of my role in the community under investigation makes any other option unrealistic. It was my goal to buttress Rogers’ idea of reflexivity with candid disclosure to the participants about my motivations for the study as well as questions about how they might view me as a researcher.

There was also one additional concern with regard to my ethnicity. Although I have visited Korea twice with my wife for extensive stays, studied the language for over a year, as well as read numerous books and research papers about Korea, it is still from a Western perspective that I based my interpretations. I struggled to maintain a constant level of vigilance in my level of disclosure about how decisions were made and claims
justified during the analysis and writing portion of the study. However, I am not sure that
the participants in the study will see things the same way. I hope that being an Anglo-
American with a desire to ask intimate questions of Korean immigrants was not a major
detriment to the findings.

Limitations of this study

There are a number of limitations to this study. A lack of access to the Bulloch
County schools prohibited learning more about the teachers’ perspectives on Korean
parental participation. Although the former superintendant of schools for Bulloch County
and two teachers were willing to be interviewed, the current superintendant would not
grant me access to classrooms or teachers during school hours. Teachers’ opinions of the
Korean parents would give a clearer picture of what their absence at the school precludes.
Access to the classroom would also provide participant observation of the Korean
students interacting with teachers fostering a better understanding of the current situation.

Because my wife is Korean and we often attend services at the Korean Mission,
issues of access were not difficult to overcome. However, the use of a translator during
interviews and transcribing added difficulty to the case study. Periodic misunderstandings
about questions as well as responses caused confusion on occasions. Member checks
were used to clarify areas of uncertainty. Something out of my control was the subtle
nuance of meaning lost during translation. While I feel that I did everything within my
power to avoid miscommunication, any translation runs the risk of missing something
present in the native language.

Lastly, I believe that the short nature of the time spent investigating the case of
Korean immigrants in Statesboro limited the scope of this study. Although being present
during the evolution of the Korean immigrant community afforded a unique opportunity to witness the formation of the social networks, a longer period of data gathering would allow much thicker description. Unfortunately, such a study was not possible.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter detailed the conceptual framework, research design, data collection and analysis methods, and my role as researcher. I described the ethnographic case study approach adopted for this study as well as my rationale for this choice. I provided a description of how data were handled after collection, the method of coding, and finally the process of developing codes. After careful consideration, I concluded that the methods outlined here were the most pertinent for the material under review as well as the foreseen goals of the study. The findings chapters reveal how the design described in this chapter was utilized in a manner conducive to an examination of the use of social capital by the Korean immigrant population in Statesboro.
CHAPTER 4

THE PUSH/PULL DYNAMICS OF IMMIGRATION

“I woke up this morning, had them Statesboro Blues”
—Blind Willie McTell (1928).

In December of 1864 on their march to the sea, troops led by General William T. Sherman stopped in Statesboro. A Union officer asked a saloon proprietor for directions to Statesboro. The man replied, “You standing in the middle of town.” The soldiers destroyed the courthouse—a crude log structure that doubled as a barn when court was not in session—and continued on their way to Savannah (Pressley, 2008). In the subsequent 147 years, “The Boro” has grown into a bustling college town with an estimated population of 27,158 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Georgia Southern University, the largest university in south Georgia, as well as agriculture drives the local economy. And like many rural areas in the South, this area was an almost exclusively biracial community until 30 years ago. However, the rapid rise of labor-intensive industries brought a shift in the demographics.

Changes in the nature of southern society influenced the search for a cheap labor source to replace the once reliable pool of poor White and Black workers. The civil rights movement, increased educational opportunities, welfare reforms, and other features associated with Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs constricted traditional labor supplies of farmers and manufacturers (Griffith, 1995). However, growth in construction and large-scale agriculture in the South combined with Mexico’s worsening economic
problems in the 1980s and 1990s to provide the impetus for people to look for work north of the border (Bankston, 2007). Latino migrant workers arriving in the early 1990s then held the distinction of being the immigrant group in the area. Local farmers and businesses have maintained the desire for the cheap immigrant labor since that time. However, the locales from which some of these workers originate are beginning to shift. Since 2005, hundreds of Korean immigrants have come to work at Claxton Poultry, a poultry processing plant and distributor located in southeast Georgia. While on the surface the influx appears to be an idiosyncratic phenomenon, examination of the underlying factors reveals much about the mechanisms driving the displacement. This chapter will describe both the sending and receiving communities related to these Korean immigrants, and how a significant number of Korean immigrant children came to be enrolled in one rural southeastern U.S. school district. And while the geopolitical and economic circumstances that led to Korean students enrolling in Bulloch County schools are the focus, broader implications are discussed.

**Sending Community: The Republic of South Korea**

There are certain key events that I suggest are pertinent to the lives of the Korean immigrants settling in Statesboro, Georgia that give insight into their motivations for moving there. In the following sections I will discuss the events since the Korean War that hold significance in the Korean immigrants’ decisions to migrate to south Georgia. Specifically, I will focus on the Korean economy after their 1997 economic crisis.

**The Korean Miracle**

The post Korean War economy has been referred to as the “Korean Miracle” (Chang, 2008). The years following the 1953 armistice saw amazing economic
expansion. Although the country suffered widespread destruction during the 1950-1953 war, the collective drive of the South Korean people quickly transformed the nation. Indeed, Korea followed an economic strategy that subordinated all other socio-economic factors to the market, “building up the physical and human capital base prior to turning to consumer durable production” (Chomsky, 2010). This course of action appeared to be an effective means of growth for the Korean economy until the general crisis of 1997, brought on by a massive expansion of credit based primarily on foreign loans. The World Trade Organization, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund intervened in order to stabilize the financial turmoil. However, the intervention was not without consequence for the mass of the population. It is the consequences of the IMF intervention in the late 1990s that set the stage for the movement of Koreans to Claxton Poultry.

Post IMF. Korea raised itself precipitously from a per capita income half of that of Ghana in 1960 to one the world’s leading industrial societies by radical violation of neoliberal economic rules that seek to maximize the role of the private sector. The state controlled all things economic and there was a propaganda campaign aimed at promoting a collective effort to raise exports and grow the national economy. Spending on anything not essential for industrial development was prohibited or strongly discouraged by the government and the state exercised great control over private firms. Violation could bring the death penalty (Chang, 2008). These policies changed radically after the financial crisis. The IMF intervention in 1997 demanded financial liberalization, encouraging market-based reforms that resulted in disastrous consequences; a staggering number of businesses failed, unemployment increased, wages froze and domestic income decreased, non-wage benefits were cut, and homelessness grew (Koo, 2007). These orthodox
economic precepts slowed the Korean economy dramatically and were felt mostly by the middle class. Millions of jobs were lost and thousands of businesses failed due to excessively high interest rates and contracting financial policies (Stiglitz, 2002).

The general change in the economy had long term ramifications, including “increased job insecurity for white-collar workers, the rise of consumption as a dominant basis of class distinction, and the intensification and globalization of educational pursuits” (Koo, 2007). This was a serious blow to a society whose dominant public discourse in the 1980s was about creating one large middle-class society. However, the Korean middle-class has not disappeared. What has happened is very similar to the current economic situation in the United States. Koo (2007) explains:

A sizable proportion of the population has been pushed down from a stable middle-class position to the margins of the middle-class or to working-class status, while a small proportion of the middle-class has come out of the financial crisis with an even stronger financial status and has widened the socioeconomic gap between themselves and the rest of the larger middle-class. The aggregate effects thus are not simply pushing down the majority of middle-class people below the class boundary, but introducing an internal differentiation within the middle-class and muddling the meaning of middle-class (p. 4).

Thus, the changes put a stop to the dreams of many ordinary Koreans. Those who once thought their futures were secure in lifetime employment with one company suddenly found themselves scrambling to figure out how to maintain the lifestyle they had grown to enjoy. Equally, education became a mechanism for class reproduction rather than for social mobility and became far from the reach of those once secure in their middle-class
lifestyles. In the next section, I will discuss how this happened in conjunction with the economic shakeup.

**Education.** Part of the changes implemented after the financial crisis included the concept of *seguyehwa*. This was a top-down reform of the Korean political economy in the 1990s aimed to meet rapidly changing conditions of the world economy (Chang, 2008). Through the expansion of education in and outside of Korea, the government viewed *seguyehwa* as a means to become a world-class, advanced country (Kim, 2000). In 2000, Korea lifted state regulations that had kept ambitious parents from sending their children to foreign countries. What was once only available to certain socioeconomic groups became popular even among the general public. The reputation of “studying abroad in order to flee or escape” switched to “studying in order to achieve better education” (Song, 2010, p. 25). The English language, viewed as a lingua franca for business purposes, became an important part of the national competitiveness program and was seen as a key to national and individual economic growth (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). The fervor over learning the language became colloquially known as “English fever” (Jeong, 2004; Kim, 2006; Shim & Park, 2008) and is part of the much larger national focus deemed “education fever” (Seth, 2002).

**Education fever.** The pursuit of education in Korea is the product of traditional Confucian attitudes towards learning and status, new egalitarian ideas introduced from the West and the complex and often contradictory interaction between new and old ideas (Seith, 2002). The almost manic preoccupation has also been referred to as a “war for education” (Park, 1994) and a national “preoccupation with education” (Moon, 2011). Indeed, Korean students consistently outperform other students in international tests of
scholarly ability. Yet, the results of the economic changes after the crisis combined with “education fever” to create a system that is increasingly less accessible to many in the now stratified middle-class. Accordingly, Koreans have become increasingly exam-oriented with the single preoccupation of preparing students for college entrance exams. And since the public school system has become discredited in its ability to adequately prepare students for these exams, parents have turned to private institutions as a supplement (Koo, 2007). In 2009, 87.4 percent of primary school students, 74.3 percent of middle school students, and 62.8 percent of general high school students used some form of this “shadow education” (Lee & Shouse, 2011).

Those most affected by the economic downturn find the financial strain of competing to get their children into the best universities a heavy burden. In an effort to find viable alternatives to the competitive nature of Korean education, an increasing number of families have resorted to the “wild goose family” approach (Song, 2010). This strategy involves the father staying in Korea, while the mother goes abroad with the kids for the sake of an English-medium education. According to the New York Times (2008), an estimated 40,000 children have migrated to foreign countries with their mothers since the trend began in the 1990s. Part of the rationale for the move is the parents’ desire for Korean children to achieve spoken proficiency and communicative competence in English (Song, 2010). In Korea, many believe that the ideal teacher should be a native speaker (Pennycook, 1998). However, sending their children to schools that have such teachers is often financially impossible.

Like many other immigrant groups, the 1.0 million Korean born immigrants in the US are settling in larger numbers in states beyond the traditional gateways like California
and New York. The Korean immigrant population in Georgia nearly doubled between 2000 and 2008, with the largest concentration in the Atlanta area. Those coming to live in the US are also, on average, highly educated. In 2008, over 51% of Korean born adults in the United States had a bachelor’s degree or higher (Terrazas & Batog, 2010). In all then, it is remarkable that an immigrant population with a profile such as the Koreans would opt to work in a poultry processing plant in rural Georgia. The balance of this chapter will parse the history of their settlement in the Statesboro area and their employment at Claxton Poultry. In line with the research questions of this dissertation, I will bring to light information concerning the receiving community. Much about the nature of the negotiations between the workers, the poultry factory, and the US Department of State remains enigmatic. However, information about decisions made before and after the newcomers’ arrival was readily available and compelling. The factors pushing Koreans out of their homeland were covered in the first section of this chapter. Consideration of the pull from the receiving community will now be described.

Receiving Community: Statesboro, Georgia

Irrespective of research that suggests immigrants actually boost the overall US economy (e.g., Nadadur, 2009), at the local level newcomers are seen as a threat to low-skilled working class adults and a drain on the local infrastructure and services (Fennelly & Federico, 2008). In line with Griffith’s 1995 assessment of immigrant labor in the poultry industry, in 2011 some residents in the small-town of Claxton held extremely restrictionist views yet it was also the home of industries most consistently employing immigrant labor. The anti-immigrant politics that dominated the state and local governments in Georgia were not linked to capitalism or the interests of capital. On the
contrary, the free circulation of labor was in the interests of big capital. Zizek (2009) argued that essentially, it is the local businesses who were inherently multiculturalists and tolerant. I add a caveat: The poultry processing plant’s welcome of Latinos was only partial. As the hiring of the Korean immigrants showed, an alternative source of cheap immigrant labor was welcomed because it was expedient.

Best (2010) noted that when considering politics, “…it is more fruitful to take seriously the network of relations between particular ideas and the daily practices and desires to which those ideas give expression and shape” (locations 904-15). Since Georgia’s Latino population began to grow, the anti-immigrant policies and enforcement in Georgia have both reflected and amplified public anxiety over multiculturalism (Beck & Alexsahht-Snider, 2002). Georgia was one of the 31 states that passed a nonbinding English-only law (http://www.us-english.org/). Passage of the Security and Immigration Compliance Act in April of 2006 also put Georgia at the helm of a growing number of states implementing heightened restrictions against informal immigration. The act ordered state agencies to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement programs. A direct result of such enforcement opened the door for the arrival of Koreans in Claxton.

In September of 2006, a raid by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the Crider Poultry processing plant in Stillmore, Georgia left the plant without two-thirds of its work force. Laotian Hmong refugees living in Minnesota were recruited to fill a number of the vacancies. And as Baptist pastor Ariel Rodriguez related, “The employers around here are still afraid of hiring Hispanics. They’re afraid that immigration agents are coming, the workers are going to disappear, and they’ll have to pay fines” (Ludden, 2007). It appeared that Claxton Poultry was well aware of the risks at
nearby Crider Poultry and started to develop a solution to their labor demands long before suffering a similar fate. Such tactics are not uncommon in an industry that sometimes sees a workforce turnover rate as high as 100 percent in a year (Human Rights Watch, 2004). I will discuss the arrangement with Korean workers below. First, however, I provide background on the nature of race relations and labor in Georgia and the sort of environment the Korean workers entered.

**New South, Old Hierarchy**

The complexity of class relations in southeast Georgia has its roots in the culture of racism that emerged as slavery was dismantled: “Though certain humans could no longer be seen as chattels, they could be placed into a social hierarchy that legitimized the call for those at the bottom to provide the manual labor for those at the top” (Kayatekin, 2001, p. 228). This was the case for African Americans, as well as poorer Whites, in Bulloch and Evans Counties until well after desegregation. In the 1980s Latino immigrants started to arrive in the area to harvest the heavily marketed Vidalia Sweet Onions and there was another shift in the hierarchy of labor. Because of the low socioeconomic status of the Latinos who came to the area to work in agriculture and poultry processing, Latino was synonymous with “Mexican” in this region. And that term was often said in a derogatory way. As Fennelly and Frederico (2008) pointed out, the arrival of immigrants to rural communities such as Statesboro and Claxton often occurred in concert with the loss of small farms, expansion of large scale farming, and the “Walmartization” of the area. Thriving privately owned businesses have given way to one-stop-shop warehouse stores and chain restaurants have replaced family owned
establishments. It was therefore not surprising that anyone perceived as a threat to wages and a sign of the changing times would be treated negatively.

In the remaining sections, I outline how Koreans came to work at Claxton Poultry. The nature of the arrangement itself says much about the deferential treatment of the Koreans versus Latinos. With profit motives in mind, the lengths businesses will go to in order to avoid confrontations with regulators while maintaining a cheap labor force are great. As of May 2011, Claxton Poultry had hired 153 Koreans in what can be described as immigration whack-a-mole. By introducing a second, documented, minority group into the labor force, Claxton Poultry avoided several problems that could affect overall production. However, the actions of the poultry plant also had repercussions in the local community, specifically the schools. What follows are the particulars of how the Korean immigrants came to work at Claxton Poultry as well as the implications for local schools.

**Kukjei and Claxton Poultry Make a Deal**

Although US regulations forbade employers to require a worker to stay in a job for a fixed time as a stipulation for obtaining permanent residency, an article in the Claxton Enterprise suggested that this is the case at Claxton Poultry. The Koreans working for Claxton Poultry pay thousands of dollars to an immigration broker, Kukjei Immigration Development Corporation (KIDC), who take care of the visa paperwork and act as a go between for the plant and the Koreans. An article in the Claxton Enterprise explained:

> Once the immigrants arrive in the United States and begin work at Claxton Poultry, they will receive permanent residency visas. However, if they do not fulfill their one-year obligation to work at the plant, the immigrants would not be
considered permanent residents and would not be able to receive US citizenship (Cunningham, 2005, 1A).

When interviewed by the Statesboro Herald about their newfound situation, immigrants referred to their position as a “sensitive situation” (Hallman, 2005, 1A). In Maryland, Purdue Chicken used a similar program during the 1990s. Purdue eventually ended the practice after a series of articles in the Washington Post revealed the spurious nature of the program (Pae, 2000). A conversation with an employee in management at Claxton Poultry suggested that as of January 2011 the program in Claxton was still actively seeking workers from Korea under the same arrangement with KIDC.

What neither the newspaper articles nor the employee at Claxton Poultry elaborated upon is the amount of money paid to KIDC or the exact nature of that arrangement. Interviews with numerous Korean workers revealed that some of them paid up to $20,000 for the opportunity to work at Claxton Poultry with the caveat that the deposit would be reimbursed at the end of the one-year work period. The offer was advertised in some of Korea’s major newspapers. Meetings at KIDC headquarters in Seoul vaguely outlined the nature of the work, while also promising a safe rural setting and high performing schools for the workers’ children. According to the interview data, the majority of the workers, with very few exceptions, cash in on their deposit after one year of work for Claxton Poultry and move away from Bulloch County. As of this writing, “the pipeline” remains open, and workers arrive and leave on a rotating basis.

The US Department of Labor website (http://www.dol.gov) explains the task of obtaining an employment based green card as a 3 step process: 1) Permanent Labor Certification, 2) Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker, and 3) Adjust of Status to a
permanent resident of the United States. Step one of the process requires that the employer, Claxton Poultry in this case, must prove to the Department of Labor that there are not sufficient US workers able, willing, qualified and available to accept the job opportunity and that employment of the foreign worker will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed US workers. The other steps in the process are completed after the employee begins work. According to the Department of Labor’s *Foreign Labor Certification Annual Report (2010)*, Claxton Poultry ranked as the number one employer filing for permanent visas for employees from Korea in 2010 with 27 certified. The average wage offered to those working for Claxton Poultry was $17,680 a year (p. 114).

The legal status of the Korean workers at Claxton Poultry raises an interesting issue. “Undocumented” workers have no legal rights. Oftentimes, they are treated as invisible in the community. The employer does not want to admit that they are there. Neither does the worker want to raise awareness of their presence in fear of being fired or deported. However, Koreans with legal status fit into a different niche. Because they were working at Claxton Poultry legally, and also perceived by many as a “model minority” (Lee, 2006), they were not seen as an outside threat; they were fully normalized and “drowned in the indistinct crowd of citizens” becoming invisible as well (Zizek, 2009, p. 119). The local newspapers in Statesboro and Claxton portrayed the Koreans as middle-class and arriving with money, counter to the restrictionist view of Latino immigrants (whether they are documented or not). A newly arrived Korean worker described it this way, “The overall education level of Koreans is high, with most having at least a bachelor’s degree….Koreans want to work hard, follow laws and be a positive part of the
community….We want to invest our money here.” (Hallman, 2005, 3A). This was truly a win/win for Claxton Poultry. They got their cheap labor and at the same time did not have to worry about US Immigration and Customs Enforcement like their counterparts at Crider Poultry. Neither did they suffer much backlash from the local community.

There are additional factors that possibly influenced Claxton Poultry’s choice of Korean workers and their subsequent acceptance by the local community. In 2006, Kia Motors held the groundbreaking ceremony for their manufacturing plant in West Point, Georgia (about a four hour drive from Claxton). It is the first of its kind in the United States. Researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology estimated that Kia would generate an annual economic gain of $4 billion a year (Schwarz, 2010). My point here is that recent events such as the opening of the Kia plant in west Georgia and the ICE raid in nearby Stillmore left a certain impression on local residents, one that painted Koreans as “good” immigrants and Latinos as “bad”. In the “cultural circuit” where local residents draw upon the information at hand in order to make meaning (Hall, 1997), immigrant groups are often perceived in a certain way without being given the benefit of the doubt. The Korean workers and their entire families were offered permanent residency whereas Latino migrant workers were never afforded that option.

However, it would be imprudent to suggest that the Korean immigrants were welcomed without comment. An interview with a former administrator for Bulloch County schools revealed the feelings of some local residents during the period when Koreans first started to arrive. The local newspaper had recently run an article describing the arrival of the Korean workers. Jill (pseudonym) recounted an incident in a restaurant where a number of men questioned her about the costs of educating the new Koreans.
They asked Jill, “Ya’ll going to pay for their education with our tax dollars?” (Interview, 5/27/11). The owner of the restaurant told the men to leave her alone and the issue was dropped. However, Claxton Poultry did receive a threatening letter from the headquarters of the Ku Klux Klan in Ellijay, Georgia a few weeks after the Claxton Enterprise newspaper article ran. The overarching message of the letter was that Claxton Poultry was stealing jobs from working class white people by hiring Koreans. To date, no Korean workers have suffered any physical abuse. However, such incidents tend to indicate that although there was not an overt outcry over the arrival of the Korean workers, it did not go fully unnoticed by local residents.

**Claxton Poultry: The 3-D’s (Dirty, dangerous, and demanding).** Claxton, Georgia’s only real claim to fame is the somewhat comical label of “Fruit Cake Capital of the World”. Two other somewhat less risible options for employment are one of the state’s largest apiaries and the local poultry processing plant. However, the town remains a sleepy backwater. Only one event in the town’s history could be considered noteworthy in the annals of history. In 1984 a meteorite fell in Claxton and struck a mailbox. The mailbox was subsequently sold for $83,000 because of its unique status of having been struck by a meteorite ([http://www.meteorlab.com](http://www.meteorlab.com)), surely a windfall for someone in such a cash-strapped community.

While the apiary was one of the largest in the state, it only employed 5-9 workers at any given time and had annual sales of less than $500,000 in 2006 ([http://www.manta.com](http://www.manta.com)). Conversely, at the time of this writing, Claxton Poultry had over 1,600 employees and was a multimillion-dollar operation. While this appeared on the surface to be a great addition to the local economy when founded in 1949, the success
of the business hinged upon a steady supply of cheap labor that was difficult to maintain. Georgia poultry plants, like much of the US, began to rely on a mostly Latino workforce beginning in the 1990s (Griffith, 1995). In the second half of the aughts, however, Georgia became more restrictive with immigration policies (Sabia, 2010). Incidents such as the aforementioned Crider Poultry plant raid in 2006 as well as the ongoing battle between immigration officials and Vidalia Onion growers (Rojas, 2011) were not unknown to employers of immigrants, both documented and undocumented. Although Latino workers were a majority in many meat and poultry plants around the country (Human Rights Watch, 2004), the industry also had a record of shifting hiring practices in accordance with local conditions. The employment patterns of Claxton Poultry mirrored that of the poultry industry as a whole, reflecting targeted recruitment as well as the recent changes in the character and enforcement of immigration laws in Georgia (Griffith, Broadway, & Stull, 1995).

The long-term nature of Claxton Poultry’s quest for an alternative source of cheap labor and the steps taken to secure that source were revealed to me in the interview with Jill. Although Evans County schools have had a large Latino population for years and ESOL teachers at the elementary, middle, and high schools, Bulloch County was chosen as the preferred school for the newcomer immigrants. Jill shared with me that Claxton Poultry approached the school almost a year before the first Korean workers arrived and inquired about the feasibility of Bulloch County schools accommodating 80 and possibly up to 300 new families. The school was happy with the idea of a “model minority” group coming to the district and although Evans County is historically the lower

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2 Statistics for the Bulloch County 2011-2012 school year indicated 191 Asian students enrolled (The specific number of Korean students within this demographic was not available).
performing of the two schools in Adequate Yearly Progress and would have benefited more from an influx of high achievers, Bulloch County was favored. As Jill stated, “We just knew that education was very important to Koreans….Math-wise I saw it as a plus for our school system because the kids had a lot of ability” (Interview, 5/27/11). She went on to explain that when asked, the teachers voiced no complaints about the large influx of Korean students. The biggest hurdle appeared to be money for the extra classrooms needed. Jill contacted the local state representative, explained the situation and “lo and behold, we got $250,000 of revenue immediately” (Interview, 5/27/11). While the underpinnings of this arrangement remain murky, it appears that the state representative was a supporter of local business, or at least a well-established local business with an apparently foolproof source of cheap labor.

Essentially what happened with the KIDC, Claxton Poultry, Bulloch County schools’ deal was a number of compromises; KIDC assured the Korean workers that their children would be able to attend good schools, Claxton Poultry facilitated state funding for the schools, and Bulloch County gained what they perceived to be a boost in test scores. All of this however hinged upon an agreement by the Korean workers to devote one year of their lives to a job that had the highest rate of injury and illness in the manufacturing sector (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

An interesting fact that I gleaned from the interview with Jill was that she was not made aware of the fact that the length of the agreement between KIDC and the Korean workers was one year. After the one year period of the first families ended, the Korean families started to leave. She and the other administrators did not understand why, but thought that the families may have felt uncomfortable in the community. I explained the
nature of the one-year contract and she was surprised. No one from Claxton Poultry or KIDC informed Jill that the contract was a short-term arrangement. An elementary school English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher expressed that the teachers had the same surprise. Once the initial contact with the school was made by Claxton Poultry to solidify the arrangement, no other effort was made to follow up in terms of how the Korean families were adjusting to the new school.

The balance of this chapter will focus on the differences in the two communities in question at the time of the arrival of the Korean immigrants. Claxton, on the one hand, was a much smaller and poorer community, while Statesboro was the larger, more prosperous neighbor. While observing some of the most glaring differences between the two communities, it is important to keep in mind that the situation with the school choice was a possibility made available through maneuvers by Claxton Poultry, Bulloch County schools, and the state of Georgia, but also involved a conscious decision by the Korean workers to chose one school district over the other. According to the 2010 census (US Census, 2010), 208 Koreans resided in Bulloch County while the home of Claxton Poultry, Evans County, had only 6.

**The communities.** The premeditated decision of the Korean workers’ to live in Bulloch County and send their children to the school district there says much about who gets access to better schools in this area of the US. Comparing a few facts about the neighboring school districts will illuminate some of the stark contrasts between the two. First, the population of Bulloch County is much larger than that of Evans County, at 67,761 residents versus 11,646 respectively. The history of the two counties reflects the economic divisions that have long been present in the region. Bulloch County was
created in 1776 and named after one of Georgia’s first governors, Archibald Bulloch whose great-great grandson was President Theodore Roosevelt (http://www.bullochcounty.net). Evans County was not established until 1914 and its main claims to fame were the aforementioned fruitcakes and mailbox meteorite incident.

The respective county seats further displayed the stark differences between the neighboring counties. Claxton had a population of 2,276 and Statesboro had a much larger population of 27,158.

Table 1 shows some interesting facts about Bulloch versus Evans County with regard to median household income. While the information available does not include Korean households (the data is from the 2000 census, prior to their arrival), it does give a feel for the situation the Koreans entered. The disparity in income for Hispanics (the term used by the US Census bureau) living in the adjoining counties is telling when compared with the educational outcomes for the same group. The breakdown for median household income for Blacks and Whites is virtually the same. However, Hispanics in Bulloch County made more than the median income while those in Evans County made more than a third less. Equally, 41.7% of Hispanics were below the poverty level in Bulloch County during the same period while that figure was 54.6% in Evans County.

Table 3

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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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(Information from The Georgia County Guide)
Education. The amount of money spent on schooling in the respective school districts calls further attention to the differences in affluence. Bulloch County’s total expenditures on K-12 education in 2007-2008 were $2,171 per capita while Evans County spent only $1,560 per capita in the same time period, thus reflecting the poorer local tax base. This is not surprising considering the historical differences of wealth between the two counties. What the schools were able to offer says much about how that difference in wealth is maintained. Bulloch County had an Advanced Placement program and their students scored higher on both the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and the American College Testing (ACT). Sixty-nine percent of their graduates had college preparatory diplomas in the 2007-2008 school year (Douglas, 2010). Claxton High School was a Needs Improvement School Year 2. The school failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English/Language Arts and/or Mathematics for the third year in a row (http:www/evans.k12ga.us). Only 63.5% of their graduates had college preparatory diplomas during the same time period.

There is another telling statistic here. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of the student population by race. Evans County had become a majority-minority school district by the time the Korean workers arrived.

Table 4

*K-12 Enrollment—Percentage of total by Race/Ethnicity, 2007-2008*

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bulloch</th>
<th>Evans</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10,174</td>
<td>1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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Additionally, 1.2 % of the students in Bulloch County were labeled English Language Learners (ELL) while Evans County had 7.9% of its students in this category. A more troubling statistic was the number of Economically Disadvantaged (ED) students. Bulloch County had 52.8% ED students in the 2007-2008 school year while Evans County had an incredible 75.6% (Douglas, 2010). The overarching point to be gleaned from this information is that Bulloch County public schools catered to a more affluent student body and offered an education that afforded more options for social mobility after graduation while Evans County students came from more modest backgrounds and attended struggling schools. Given this information, then, it should be no surprise that Korean families who held education in such high regard settled en masse in Bulloch County even though they were drawn to the area by employment in Claxton. However, it was their economic status upon arrival to the US that made such a choice available.

Chapter Conclusion

My examination of Claxton Poultry’s search for cheap labor suggests that the repercussions of their efforts affect more than the workplace. In subtle and complex ways, the arrival of Koreans in Statesboro reveals much about the complex nature of immigration. At the root of the immigration process are two factors, the push in Korea prompting the search for alternatives and the pull from Claxton Poultry offering opportunity. However, it is the ramifications for the local community, and especially the schools, that provide the most important implications for immigration as well as education policy makers.
A foundational issue is the question of who gets access to the best education in the region. The acquisition of funds for Bulloch County schools before the arrival of the Korean immigrants says much about small town politics and the close ties between business and government. In order to help Claxton Poultry appear more desirable to the Korean workers, Bulloch County schools were supplied with extra money although the struggling Evans County school district had the more obvious need for help. One must ask the question, why were such funds never procured when the majority-minority Evans County schools first began to flounder? The decision helps perpetuate longstanding inequalities between the neighboring school districts that in turn help maintain the economic distinctions. Addressing such practices would help dissolve such hegemony.

Related to this issue is the question of permanent residency. Why were the Korean workers at Claxton Poultry afforded green cards in exchange for their one year of work when such arrangements were never made with Latino workers? The actions of Claxton Poultry, The United States Department of Labor, as well as Immigration and Customs Enforcement appear to show a preference for one source of cheap labor over another. As mentioned earlier, “documented” immigrants are better able to remain invisible in local communities, especially if considered a “model minority” (Lee, 2006). Immigration and education policy makers should take heed that industries such as poultry and meatpacking merely change their strategies in order to perpetuate low labor costs. Until such practices are addressed at the national level, communities home to such industries will continue to see periodic changes in their demographics. More important to educators, questions about how to educate the children of the workers will persist as well.
My last point is related to the first two. The underlying economic factors driving the push/pull dynamics of immigration are reciprocal. The Korean families coming to work at Claxton Poultry are doing so because of the changing economy in Korea and the resulting affects on the educational system. Disruption of what it means to be middle-class in Korea pushed many families to look for options outside of their homeland. Thousands of families find themselves searching for such alternatives and industries such as KIDC and Claxton Poultry supply one type of solution. The dual desires to find job security as well as the best educational option for their children make the idea of working in a poultry processing plant for one year seem worthwhile. However, the scope of the lives affected by their decision to come to the US reaches far from the Korean peninsula. Continual exploitation of immigrant labor in pursuit of higher profits will guarantee repetition of such occurrences.
CHAPTER 5

THE KOREAN SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

“The profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible” (Bourdieu 1985, p. 249).

This chapter seeks to achieve two objectives. First, it examines how the church functions in the Korean immigrant community of Statesboro by exploring the social and community services offered. Second, this chapter considers the implications of the Statesboro Korean experience for existing theories of church-based immigrant social capital. The Korean community in Statesboro illustrates that frequent assumptions in the literature about the nature of Korean immigrants and social networks do not always work in practice as they have been hypothesized to work in the literature. Particularly relevant to the discussion of social capital in this population is the short nature of the their one-year contracts at Claxton Poultry and the subsequent rapid turnover rate. As sojourners in Statesboro, their situation is unique when compared to most other Korean immigrant groups in the United States. Counter to much of the literature, theirs is an example of immigrant social networks not producing a large amount of social capital. What follows is an exploration of what factors stymie the expected benefits of being part of the Korean immigrant community in Statesboro.

An Immigrant Population in Flux

When I asked Rita what her plans were for her new life in the United States, her response was, “First I have to finish this” (Interview, 5/4/11); “this” being her family’s
sojourn in Statesboro. She described the way that her husband brought the family (Rita and two kids) to the US without consulting them. He was very unhappy with his job and many aspects of Korean workplace culture. She related that he was becoming frustrated with the constant scrutiny from his peers and the long hours spent with coworkers afterhours. Guided by Confucian ideals, Korean employers and supervisors take care of their employees and subordinates in a father-son like relationship. The boundary between personal and public life is often less clear than the Western conception (Chen & Chung, 1994). Employees are expected to participate in communal drinking with coworkers late into the night, often at the expense of the family. On a whim Rita’s husband went to an immigration broker orientation session with a friend in Seoul and applied for a poultry job. She and the kids were disappointed with their new circumstances in the US and in a state of limbo while he fulfilled his one-year work obligation at Claxton Poultry. Rita did not know where they would go, but they had no plans to stay in Statesboro. Her 14-year-old daughter was a champion swimmer in Korea. In Statesboro she gained weight and could not compete at the same level as in Korea. Much like the schools, the swim team in Statesboro was not what she was used to at home. Her 19-year-old son had just finished the rigorous college entrance exam process in Korea. He was now in the US, unable to speak English, and without many options.

Susan is an example of another type of Korean immigrant working at Claxton Poultry. Her situation is similar to the “early study abroad” phenomenon, wherein parents send their children to live and study in a foreign country with the mother for a short period of time while the father continues to work in Korea (Kim, 2010). Susan arrived one year ago with her two children; her son Jay is 10 and her daughter, Hanna, is 16.
Susan’s husband works for a major bank in Seoul and is still in Korea. When I asked about her reasons for coming to the US, Susan explained, “In Korea, it’s very hard to go to college, especially in Seoul. But in America there are lots of opportunities” (Interview, 3/30/11). As for her plans once she finishes working in Claxton, Susan said that she would like to stay in Statesboro until her daughter graduates high school then move to a larger city. Her husband plans to work in Korea until his job is no longer available, a very real concern since the 1997 economic crisis (Chang, 2008). Susan relayed that he planned to move to the US if such a shift took place.

A common theme in the interviews was that work at Claxton Poultry and life in Statesboro was just temporary. The one-year commitment to work in Claxton was a pain that had to be endured before their real lives in the US would begin. During the course of the study, the number of Koreans who expressed a desire to stay at Claxton Poultry, or in Statesboro, after one year was very small. Of the 14 families interviewed, none had definitive answers about their plans for the future. Yet, they were all certain that they would be leaving Claxton Poultry (and Statesboro) after their one-year commitment. I personally only encountered four such instances of people staying longer, a remarkably small number considering that over 150 workers had been recruited at the time of this writing. Two stayed at Claxton Poultry. Both bought houses. One came with a large amount of savings and had already bought a house before his yearlong commitment ended. The other was going to the technical college in Statesboro to become an electrician. The majority of Korean immigrants quickly move on at the end of their contract. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2003) refers to transit migrants as aliens who stay in a country for some period of time while seeking to migrate
permanently to another country (p. 7). In effect, the nature of the Korean poultry workers’ short stays in Statesboro makes them transit migrants as well. Statesboro is a way station on their journey to their real immigrant experience in the United States. Counter to the literature, which largely assumes that immigrants in small rural communities desire to stay there, the findings in this study suggests that the situation in Statesboro appears to be atypical.

**Sources of instability for the Korean immigrant community in Statesboro**

![Figure 3](image)

*Figure 3.* A bar graph of membership at the Korean Mission from August 2008-June 2011 showing the existing population as well as the number of new members during each period.

As Figure 1 reveals, the Korean population in Statesboro is constantly in flux. Claxton Poultry, and subsequently the Korean Mission, is continually gaining and loosing employees as their one-year contracts end and a new cohort arrives. There are many factors that would normally indicate advantages in the job market, and thus potential for finding other jobs in Statesboro. The Korean immigrants in Statesboro are on the average
more highly educated and more likely to have professional occupational credentials than the American host population they join. As Alba and Logan (1992) explain, individuals who come from professional/managerial and other white-collar workers have a higher potential for socioeconomic success. However, Koreans are less likely than other highly educated and skilled immigrants from Asia—especially those from the former Anglo-American colonies of the Philippines and India—to be fluent in English (Min, 1996), and therefore confront all-but-insurmountable barriers to continuing their professional careers in a rural setting. Migrants have a belief that immigration offers better opportunities for themselves and for their children than their countries of origin (Borjas, 1990). What Claxton Poultry affords is permanent residency, a prerequisite for obtaining the American Dream legally. What Statesboro does not offer Korean immigrants are options for economic prosperity.

**Language barrier.** English language skills are a huge hurdle in a small community such as Statesboro and influence the one-year sojourn phenomenon. The Koreans who finished their one-year commitment at Claxton Poultry were extremely limited in their options for employment. George, a Korean poultry worker, put it this way: “We don’t have any options because we don’t speak English very well. Who is going to hire us?” (Interview, 7/9/11). June, the Korean pastor’s wife, also mentioned the fact that many Koreans do not stay in Statesboro after their one-year commitment because of the language barrier. Besides the Claxton poultry plant, there are very few jobs that they can feasibly get without speaking the language. There are only two Korean owned businesses in Statesboro, both hair salons catering to African American women. Neither of the owners ever worked at Claxton Poultry so workers have no social ties with
these Korean entrepreneurs. In other words, finding a place where the English language is not such a barrier for success is optimal for settling down. Statesboro is not one of those places. Interviews revealed that a few poultry workers have moved to Atlanta, a city with a thriving Korean population, after their one-year contract. Others decided to make the move to the more traditional gateway communities of Los Angeles, New York, Boston, or Chicago. However, the dearth of long-term Korean residence in Statesboro is revealing in regard to the location as an option for settling down and raising a family.

**Other reasons for instability.** In addition to the lack of jobs for non-English proficient workers in Statesboro, other factors also contributed to the lack of stability in the community. Many waited years for the chance to come to the US. However, notification of acceptance was often very abrupt in nature. After no word from Kukjei for months, one could be notified and moving to the US within weeks. Also, no one knows how long Claxton Poultry will be hiring Korean workers. The quickly changing nature of hiring practices in the poultry industry (Stull, Broadway, & Griffith, 1995) makes definitive plans for the future of the Korean community in Statesboro impossible. Interviewees refer to “quotas” and “the pipeline” when discussing the selection process. However, the exact nature of how the US Departments of State and Labor make decisions about these issues is nebulous at best. A final reason for the instability in the community is the fact that there are virtually no formal services for immigrant support available in Statesboro for these families. Kukjei offers a settling service, for a price. But Bulloch County offers no assistance.

In all, then, there are multiple sources of instability in the community. On the other hand, there is at least one strong informal source of community stability and
support for the newcomers in the form of the well-established Korean Mission at the First Baptist Church. The Mission is able to offer assistance with the initial settling process for newcomers. Since churches have been hypothesized to be a key source of Korean immigrant social support, the prominence of the Korean Mission in the lives of the poultry workers in Statesboro warrants closer consideration. Below is a brief history of the development of Protestantism in Korea, followed by an analysis of how the church functions as a hub of the Korean immigrant social networks in Statesboro.

**Christianity in Korea**

It must be noted that the rise of Protestantism in Korea is not atypical of the countries of East Asia. Geopolitical events at the turn of the 20th century both opened this region to missionaries and provoked nationalist rituals. In China and Japan, these rituals manifested in patriotic identities that largely repelled Christian evangelism. Conversely, in Korea Christianity became compatible with these rituals, and conversion networks flourished (Kane & Park, 2009).

Catholicism made its way to Korea through contact with Jesuits in China in the 1800s. However, the arrival of Catholicism coincided with a fear in East Asia of takeover by the West at the time. The execution of nine French clergy and more than 8,000 believers in what has been named the Great Persecution of 1866-71 further stymied growth of the Catholic Church in Korea (Grayson, 2002). When the popularity of Protestantism began to rise in the late 1870s, the threat from Japan was much greater (Park, 2003). And as Kane and Park (2009) point out, what enabled or constrained conversion networks in East Asia during this period was not the nations themselves but
the nature of their interrelations. Korea’s precarious geopolitical position in the early 1900s made the country ripe for Protestant evangelism.

Japan forcibly annexed Korea in 1910. Koreans were made to adopt Japanese names and worship in Japanese Shinto shrines (Yi, 1995). And while acceptance of the Japanese administration was the official policy of the Presbyterian mission, the largest in Korea at the time, the Korean nationalist movement eventually adopted Protestantism. Korean Christianity soon became synonymous with a willingness to suffer for nationalism and Western missionaries were persuaded to abandon their neutrality and actively support the movement. As a testament to the significance of this conversion, Lee (2000) writes, “it was in this that the Korean Protestant Church contributed some of the most potent symbols of Korean nationalism, symbols that are still celebrated in (South) Korea and bespeak the positive association between Protestantism and Korean nationalism” (p. 120). Thus was born the association between Protestantism and Korean nationalism in response to a foreign invader.

Though Confucianism was dismissed as a political ideology by its association with invaders from both north and south, it remains a powerful influence in family relations in Korea. Its basically hierarchical social model facilitated conversions of whole families when the family head decided on Christianity (Kwon, Kim, & Warner, 2001). The growth rate of Protestant church attendance in Korea was tremendous after the 1960s. However, the numbers began to wane in the mid-1980s and have been declining since the mid-1990s. Some studies attribute the overabundance of theological graduates in Korea to the decline. The over-supply of clergy combined with social, cultural, and historical backgrounds to create a success-oriented, competitive environment in the
church that drew public criticism (Han, G., Han, J., & Kim, 2009). Nonetheless, mega-churches such as Full Gospel Church in Seoul with over half a million members attest to the continued popularity of Protestantism in Korea. And while Protestants remain less than 20% of the Korean population, most Korean immigrants are affiliated with and actively participate in Korean Protestant churches. Korean immigrant Protestants (74%) far outnumbered Buddhists (3.2%) in the early 2000s (Kwon, 2003). Thus, Korean immigrants are moving from a numerical minority religious group in their country of origin to part of the religious mainstream in the host society (Min & Kim, 2005). This holds especially true in the South, the most religious region of the US (Putnam & Campbell, 2010) and home to the Southern Baptist Convention.

**Korean Protestant Churches In The US**

The majority of contemporary Korean immigrants in the US are Protestants. Nearly 80% of Koreans in New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago attend church at least weekly, some much more (Zhou & Kim, 2006). As Zhou and Kim (2006) relate, “The Korean church is perhaps the single most important ethnic institution anchoring this ethnic community. It serves multiple functions, including meeting religious and spiritual needs, offering socio-psychological support, economic assistance, and educational resources for immigrants and their families” (p. 14). This may be more so for Koreans since they do not have long standing ethnic enclaves such as the Chinese in San Francisco or New York.

The term “religious entrepreneurship” (Dearman, 1982, p. 45) has been used to describe the large number of Korean churches established by immigrant ministers in the US. Perhaps in response to the over-abundance of clergy in Korea, immigrant churches in
the US are extremely popular, especially among newcomers. Additionally, Korean immigrants have significantly “Koreanized” Christianity in an effort to preserve the Korean subculture and identity through Christian churches (Min, 1992, p. 1391). Kwon (2003) attributes the large number of Protestant adherents in the US to selective immigration of the urban, professionalized middle class. This segment of the Korean population is more likely to be comfortable in a social atmosphere in which geographic and social mobility and tolerance of foreign ideas are more acceptable (p. 56).

**First Baptist Church of Statesboro and the Korean Mission**

“11:00 am Sunday is the most segregated hour in the week” (Putnam & Campbell, 2010, p. 161).

The majority of the Korean immigrants working at Claxton Poultry are members of the Korean Mission at the First Baptist Church in Statesboro. This discussion provides a segue into a brief history of the First Baptist Church in Statesboro and its stature in the town, after which I explain how the two congregations interact.

**First Baptist Church.** In 1880, Statesboro had a population of 25 and “the town’s reputation was not good” (First Baptist Church, 2007, p. 24). The First Baptist Church of Statesboro was established on September 3, 1882 and almost a decade later Baptists outnumbered all other religions in Statesboro. In 1900, the town had 47 Missionary Baptists, 10 Methodists, and one Presbyterian. By 1938, membership had grown to 1000 and “Despite the economic conditions the church continued to grow in numbers and the influence of Statesboro First Baptist Church was greatly felt in the community” (First Baptist Church, 2007, p. 28). According to the Glenmary Research Center (2002), of the 34.82% of the population affiliated with a religious congregation in
Statesboro, 51% are adherents of the Southern Baptist Convention. As of this writing, estimated membership at First Baptist Church was 3,500. Prominent members include the mayor of Statesboro, the superintendent as well as the ESOL coordinator for Bulloch County Schools and numerous teachers.

Putnam and Campbell (2010) point out that the religious and political views of church congregations in the US are tightly interconnected. While Americans are not necessarily consciously sorting themselves into, and out of, churches on the basis of issues with political salience (like abortion), their sorting nonetheless brings politically like-minded people together (p. 435). Social networks develop within these congregations of like-minded people and these networks tend to “keep people from switching congregations, foster good citizenship—generosity and civic engagement—and strengthen the connections voters make between their religion and their politics” (p. 32). This point is especially salient in Statesboro. People who live in rural communities are more religious than city folk, and Southerners are more religious than the rest of the country (p. 26). When it comes to small town politics, including education, who you know and associate with are very important issues.

**Role of the Korean Mission in the Korean community.** The Korean Mission at the First Baptist Church started as a bible study group that met weekly in the early 1990s. A handful of Koreans living in Statesboro at the time would gather and discuss passages out of the Bible and eat Korean food, usually at someone’s home. Eventually, they were motivated to find a pastor and the First Baptist Church helped facilitate the procurement of a place to worship (an annex of the First Baptist Church) and a small house on the

Many researchers have noted that it is the spatial concentration of immigrants that leads to an increased reliance on people of similar origin for survival and the reciprocity implicit in the exchange of social capital that allows immigrant networks to aid members (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1995; Rogers & Henning, 1999). The development and evolution of the Korean Mission of the Statesboro First Baptist Church mirrors that of most Korean church congregations in the US since the 1970s, when Korean immigrant communities were beginning to development in earnest. The church initially provided Korean immigrants with fellowship and various services associated with immigrant adjustment. Eventually, offering Korean language and cultural education for second-generation children and providing social status for Korean adult immigrants started to become increasingly important (Min, 1992). However, the short-lived nature of the poultry workers’ stays in Statesboro makes those functions difficult to sustain since members generally do not stay long enough to maintain such functions and a second generation of Korean Americans has not emerged.

**Maintenance of Social Status and Positions.** Korean immigrant churches tend to offer lay leaders many religious positions as elders, exhorters and deacons, and tend to organize these positions more hierarchically among lay members than other American Protestant churches. Koreans who hold these lay positions usually are not paid, although they contribute more money and spend more time for services than other church members. However, these ethnic church positions meet their needs for social status, which cannot be met in the larger society (or poultry processing plant). The title
indicating a church position as an elder, an exhorter or a deacon is carried not only inside the church, but also outside of it. For example, Elder Lee is called as such not only by church members, but also by other Koreans, unless he possesses a better title associated with his occupation or a voluntary organization (Min, 1992, p. 1389-1390). While this social status function may be unintended by pastors, a survey of Korean immigrants in Chicago in the 1990s indicated that Korean male immigrants who held staff positions in the ethnic church showed a lower level of depression and a higher level of life satisfaction than those who did not (Hurh & Kim, 1990). This finding is not surprising considering the fact that most Korean adult immigrants have lost their relatively high social positions associated with their pre-immigrant occupations, acutely so in Statesboro.

An interview with George (interview, 7/9/11) revealed a phenomenon that clearly illustrates their hypersensitivity to status. There exists a tacit agreement among workers at Claxton Poultry. They do not talk amongst themselves about what their jobs were back in Korea, thus eliminating a major underpinning of social standing so vital to the Confucian hierarchy that remains prevalent in Korean society. Essentially, some social norms are ignored in Statesboro because the shared experience of working at Claxton Poultry acts as a status equalizer.

Social Capital

It is well established in the migration literature that interpersonal networks are a source of social capital (Espinosa & Massey, 1999). However, when the concept of immigrant social networks is used in relation to the term social capital, it is often wrongly assumed that the former will automatically result in the later (Akcpar, 2009). Considering the importance of the Korean Mission in the lives of the immigrant
population in Statesboro, a conceptualization of what benefits the institution does and does not offer is important. A network theory of social capital (Lin, 2008) affords a way of analyzing not only what resources members of the Korean Mission contribute to their social network, but also how that network functions in the larger context of Statesboro. While membership grants certain returns for time invested, penalties exist as well. The following section parses these elements. Gaining insight into the most prominent organization in the Korean immigrant community of Statesboro is crucial to understanding their interaction with native members of the community. And while much of the situation proves to be in accord with the existing literature on immigrant communities, deviations from existing theory are apparent as well.

I found that the cultural values of Koreans in Statesboro draw upon home country traditions as these traditions are reinterpreted following immigration and resettlement. For the poultry workers, the hardship of one year of manual labor has been important in shaping how adults think about their cultural background. The cooperative, respectful attitudes that Korean families emphasize for young people are self-conscious efforts to recapture an idealized version of the traditions of home. For the investment of social relations to yield a profit, there must be an interaction between those relations and a set of cultural norms (Bankston, 2004).

The concept of social capital has been located at the level of the individual, the informal social group, the formal organization, the community, the ethnic group, and even the nation (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1995; Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999). However, Bankston and Zhou (2002) argue that since social capital does not consist of resources that are held by individuals or by groups but of processes of
social interaction leading to constructive outcomes, it is not located at any one level but emerges across different levels of analysis. The complicated nature of the concept has been described thusly,

The confusion over the meaning of this term, then, is a consequence of a metaphorical confusion of a substantive quantity (capital) and a process that takes place through stages (embedded, goal-directed social relations).

Locating and defining social capital is further complicated by the variability, contextuality, and conditionality of the process (Bankston & Zhou, 2002, p. 286).

Furthermore, I would argue that stages of social relations that lead to constructive outcomes for one group of people or in one situation may not lead to constructive outcomes for another group or in another situation. With this in mind, I describe the social networks of the Koreans living in Statesboro during a definite period of time. My description is of their situation in a particular place at a particular point in history. What follows is specific to this setting and may or may not be in accord with the circumstances of other immigrant groups (or Koreans) in other locations. However, there is one overarching point covered in the following section; membership in the Korean Mission in Statesboro does not in itself guarantee access to social capital.

Social capital, according to Hopkins (2011), can take various forms: ‘bonding’ capital typically refers to the close relationships between people within close-knit groups; ‘bridging’ capital to connections between such groups; ‘linking’ capital to relationships cutting vertically through status hierarchies. Likewise, friendships built through church attendance can constitute forms of social capital that facilitate civic integration. However,
how such social networks are used and how relationships are developed depends on group members’ understanding of their collective identity (Hopkins, 2011). In the following section, I use these ideas to argue that the Korean Mission at the First Baptist Church in Statesboro facilitates strong bonding and linking capital within the Korean Baptist community. However, I also content that it fails is in the area of bridging capital between Koreans and other worshipers, essentially nullifying any advantages afforded through the social networks of the members of the First Baptist Church.

Religion and Social Capital

Often minority faith-based identities are assumed to encourage self-segregation (see Cantle, 2005) and therefore pose barriers to cohesion and trust. For example, survey research in the U.S. suggests majority group members often assume Muslim identifications subvert identification with larger society (van Oudenhoven, Karin, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). However, as mentioned above, the majority of Korean immigrants living in Statesboro are members of the Korean Mission, a subsidiary of the First Baptist Church. Even so, they choose to worship separately and in their native language in a location that is literally within arm’s length of the entrance to the First Baptist Church. Sociologists have long viewed religious congregations as homogenous social contexts (e.g. Lenski, 1953, 1963; Niebuhr, 1929; Pope, 1942; Wilson, 1969). As McGavran (1980) relates, people “like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers” (p. 223). The members of the Korean Mission and the First Baptist Church do not appear to be exceptions to these stereotypes. It is important to note that faith groups can on occasion provide physical resources and social networks such as interfaith
dialogue networks that facilitate bridging relationships (Furbey et al., 2006). However, this is not the case in Statesboro.

Intergroup contact research suggests that for minorities, the relative powerlessness of their situation leads them to experience contact differently (Hubbard, 1999). Moreover, a minority group member’s understanding of their identity and their reaction to negative stereotyping may lead them to view contact with caution (Hopkins, 2011). In the case of the poultry workers, the intergroup dynamics among the Koreans in regards to Confucian ideals must first be taken into account, and then their status in relation to the predominantly White, English speaking members of the First Baptist Church.

In accord with Confucian philosophy, maintaining face and avoiding shame play key roles in one’s social status and the nature of one’s relationship with in-group members defines one’s identity (Shon & Ja, 1982). For the members of the Korean Mission, the majority of whom left middle-class lifestyles to come work manual labor, the downward shift in status makes adjustment to life in the US a stressful experience. Negotiating Korean cultural norms without a clear understanding of one’s own status in the hierarchy compounds the difficulty inherent in interaction with those outside of the community. The added language barrier compounds the shame factor. As Hopkins (2011) explains, situations such as that in the Korean Mission create an atmosphere in which within-group bonding activity is construed as a precondition for successful participation in bridging networks. In other words, I would argue that what may appear as a reluctance to engage in bridging activities (i.e. self-segregated worship rather than with the First Baptist Church) may actually be the Korean group members’ interpretation of their group’s powerlessness and their analyses of the resources (including space and the
bonding social capital that it may support and sustain) needed for identity empowerment. Their separate worshiping space can be understood as “empowering and as facilitating the development of bridging and linking capital” (p. 537). The hurdle to fully realizing identity empowerment and building capital in Statesboro lies in the fact that the poultry worker population is in a state of constant flux. Because of the short nature of their stays, the churchgoers at the Korean Mission do not gain much more than solace. The confidence needed to make the next step to developing bridging capital is never actualized. Cultivation of the degree of interpersonal trust underpinning the assimilation of newcomers within communities requires time and effort (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Sennett, 1970). The Korean parishioners in Statesboro are lacking both.

**Opportunities missed.** The segregated nature of the First Baptist Church and the Korean Mission stymies the sharing of information about schooling and possible employment that would be easier to access if the two groups worshiped and engaged in fellowship together. An example of this disconnect became apparent when I interviewed Reverend Kim’s wife. She relayed to me that she had met the ESOL coordinator for Bulloch County for the first time only two days prior to my interview, although the coordinator was a long-time member of the church:

June: “One of the Board of Education members is a member of the First Baptist Church. She is in charge of all of the ESL programs in Bulloch County, Debra Jones. So I just got to know her in the choir. And you know, ‘you work at the board of education?’ And then, ‘you know, some families’ parents have issues and questions. So the school told me, you need to call Debra Jones.’”

Allen: “Do you see her very often?”
June: “I met her two days ago” (Interview, 4/24/11).

My interview was on April 24, 2011, three years and three months after June’s arrival in Statesboro. Considering the large number of Claxton Poultry workers’ children enrolled in ESOL in Bulloch County schools and the importance of education in their worldview, it is unfortunate that an essential link between the Korean population and the schools took so long to come to fruition.

For the disadvantaged to gain a better status, strategic behaviors require accessing resources beyond the usual social circles (Ensel, 1979) and routine exchanges. This is not happening with the relationship between the Korean Mission and the First Baptist Church. The language barrier and cultural norms (on the part of both parties) preclude the types of interactions necessary in order for the Koreans the access information about schooling in Statesboro. As Lin (2000) points out, members of resource-rich networks are privy to information not easily available to others; “Members of such networks enjoy access to information from and influence in diverse socioeconomic strata and positions. In contrast, members in resource-poor networks share a relatively restricted variety of information and influence” (p. 787). And while social capital cannot be purely a matter of the structure of relations among individuals, but must involve values, beliefs, and expectations that are maintained and transmitted within a group by social structures (Coleman, 1990), it is counterproductive when two groups sharing the same religion cannot also share more.

**Additional negative factors.** There are ties between the pastor of the First Baptist Church, Dr. John Waters, and the second pastor of the Korean Mission, Reverend Barnabas Kim that complicate matters between the two congregations. Dr. Waters came
to First Baptist in 2004 as an interim pastor and was nominated to the position full time one year later. Reverend Barnabas Kim came to the Korean Mission in 2008. They both went to the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Waters grew up in a military family and became a Christian as a young man while living in Japan. Accordingly, he became familiar with Asian culture at an early age. In 2010, Dr. Waters accompanied Reverend Kim on a twelve-day trip to Korea where they traveled together and met representatives from the Korean Protestant ministries. These shared experiences appear to indicate a close bond.

Bankston and Zhou (1995a, 1995b, 1996) have argued that participation in ethnic religious institutions tends to create network relationships that lead to effective norms. I would add that these network relationships are not always beneficial to the community. In October of 2010, Reverend Kim announced that he and his family would be moving to Houston, Texas two months later. The news was sudden and many members of the Korean congregation privately voiced their disapproval over the way the announcement was made. The situation became more heated when Reverend Kim suggested that his father would take over his position. Many in the congregation vehemently opposed this decision and felt left out of the process. Compounding their frustration, they had no way of voicing their opinion to the First Baptist Church without going through Reverend Kim. The issue was resolved when a member of the Korean Mission contacted Reverend Kim’s mentor from divinity school who in turn contacted the First Baptist Church. A search committee including members of First Baptist and the Korean Mission was subsequently formed. The incident highlights another pitfall of the insular nature of the Korean community in Statesboro. Because of their minimal contact with First Baptist
Church, they were left with no recourse for solving their problem. Confucian ideals prohibited confronting Reverend Kim directly and none of the church members had a strong enough relationship with a member of First Baptist to ask for help.

Nevertheless, while the pastors of the two congregations may have connections, most churchgoers in America (53 percent) report that all or almost all of the people in their congregation are of the same race (Putnam, 2007). First Baptist Church is no exception to the rule. It was not until 1989 that the first African American joined the congregation (First Baptist Church, 2007). The Korean Mission remains segregated with services given strictly in Korean and very little interaction between their congregation and the overwhelmingly Anglo worshipers of the First Baptist Church. Herein lies the disconnect between a potentially great opportunity for expansion of the Koreans’ social network and access to social capital and the reality of two highly segregated populations worshiping in close proximity. Equally, the insular nature of the Korean Mission and First Baptist Church runs counter to prior research on bridging social capital in rural churches. Andrews (2011) points out that mainline religious communities in England moderate negative externalities for social cohesion associated with the arrival of large numbers of newcomers in rural areas, manifesting bridging social capital. This is not the case in Statesboro.

While the Korean Mission is the most conspicuous gathering point for Koreans in Statesboro, it is not the sole social network. Mini-ethnic enclaves of Korean families throughout Statesboro, including but not exclusive to members of the Korean Mission, as well as Korean faculty members are other nexuses in the overall Korean population. These networks occasionally overlap with members interacting on occasion. However, as
with the relationship between the Korean Mission and the First Baptist Church, the following description reveals how opportunities for the exchange of social capital amongst other Koreans in Statesboro are often missed as well. In accord with my previous observations concerning the short nature of their stays, I believe that the gap in bridging capital between members of the Korean Mission and other Korean residents of Statesboro can largely be attributed to the short nature of their stays in the area. I explore this assertion in the following section.

**Networks Other Than Church**

Zhou and Kim (2006) have argued that an ethnic community goes beyond a geographic location or a shared ethnicity. Rather, “it contains a common cultural heritage along with a set of shared values, beliefs, behavioral standards, and coping strategies with which group members are generally identified” (p. 5). Zhou and Kim go on to explain that intangible community forces and social capital must be supported by tangible ethnic social structures in order to generate resources for upward social mobility beyond mere survival. Ethnic social structures are manifested in various economic, civic, sociocultural, and religious organizations lodged in an ethnic community, as well as in social networks arising from co-ethnic members’ participation in them (Zhou & Kim, 2006).

The Korean social networks, including and separate from the Korean Mission, forged in Statesboro over the last decade are no exception. The members of the Korean community come from a variety of generations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and spiritual traditions. However, they all share the same ethnicity, language, and the fact that they are a minority group living in a small town in the Deep South. As such, this shared experience has brought together a cross section of the Korean population that may

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3 There are no elderly Koreans in Statesboro.
have otherwise never congregated. Figure 1 illustrates how the different groups overlap to form the Korean community in Statesboro.

Figure 4. Breakdown of the Korean social networks in Statesboro and how they overlap.

When Koreans first started to work at Claxton Poultry, it was easy to recognize the new members of the community. Those coming to work in Claxton were the minority in 2005. They were warmly welcomed at the Korean Mission and quickly became a part of that community. However, as the number of poultry workers began to rise, new members began arriving at the same time that families began leaving after their one-year commitment ended. None of this happened in a consistent manner. The rate of overturn began to give the community more of a transient nature. Friendship bonds were made. However, long-term plans for the future of the community were difficult to make. The tacit understanding was that time spent in Statesboro was temporary.

Korean American communities do not reproduce Korean cities or neighborhoods on American soil but form structures in response to the pressures of the new country. As Kibria (1993) states, individuals in these communities interpret their structures in terms
of the ideas that they have about life in their former country. I interpret this to be the case in Statesboro as well. There are a number of neighborhoods around Statesboro where Korean poultry worker families live. Most of the apartments are not the worst in town, nor are they the best. Every apartment that I have visited is furnished in the typical Korean fashion. There are family portraits, book shelves full of Korean language books for the kids, Korean furniture shipped from Korea or bought in Atlanta, and the smells of Korean food. Visits always include coffee, tea, and some sort of snack (usually fruit). Although they live in these mini-enclaves and make them feel very Korean, the homes still have an air of transience. The homes are functional and provide what is needed to “feel” Korean. However, most have a temporary quality that makes them seem like a place to stay rather than a fully settled home.

**An example: Susan and April.** Most Claxton workers live in these cheaper apartments. Faculty members tend to buy houses or live in more upscale townhouses. Susan and April live at Picket Fence, almost 500 feet from one another. They met in Korea during the application process with Kukjei and have stayed friends ever since. Susan’s husband is a stockbroker in Korea and does not live with the family. She is in Statesboro with her 15-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son. April has a 4-year-old girl and a 10-year-old girl. April’s husband is a stay at home dad. Although he speaks English very well and has a background in business, he has been unable to find work in the Statesboro area. Both Susan and April have children in the same grade. Yet, they rarely get together to discuss school matters. They both told me that they are too tired to get together and chat. Nor do they have time at work to talk about schooling. They never get a chance to talk because they are working too hard and only have short breaks. When
their families do get together, it is to eat (and/or drink) and relax. Schooling is not discussed.

This was a common theme in the interviews. Most families feel ashamed to ask for help from others. Because of the exhausting nature of the work at Claxton Poultry, parents do not seek assistance outside of the home. As April explained, “We feel embarrassed to ask for help. Everyone is so tired” (Interview, 4/23/11). Most appeared resolved to find solutions to their educational problems on their own.

The insular nature of the Korean community in Statesboro. The lack of a place for Korean poultry workers in the mainstream society of Statesboro led them to form closely linked social structures (Bankston, 2004). Irrelevant to their social standing before immigrating, the small number of Korean poultry workers residing in Statesboro bonded based upon a shared race, language, and culture. Homophily, the general tendency in networking for individuals to interact and share sentiment with others with similar characteristics (Homans, 1958; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954; Laumann, 1966; Lin, 1982), dictates that members of the Korean community enjoy access to information from and influence in their networks. However, with the advantages that are generated from such ties come pitfalls as well:

Any given social group reflects degrees of group demarcation and variation of network resources among members. Cognitive awareness of these resource restrictions may motivate some members of disadvantaged groups to establish social ties with members of advantaged groups, to gain better information and influence (Lin, 2000, p. 787).
As with the Korean Mission/First Baptist Church disconnect, breakdowns in the sharing of social capital between the various social networks within the Korean community in Statesboro also occur. Much of the current literature on immigrant communities speaks of the benefits of maintaining strong co-ethnic relationships and preserving cultural values. These strategies have been shown to help with social adjustment as well as academic achievement (Lew, 2006, 2007; Zhou & Bankston, 1998; Zhou & Kim, 2006). However, these studies take for granted a stable, predictable population. Variability in social networks is not accounted for.

**Korean faculty members.** Exceptions to the short-term Korean residents of Statesboro are the Korean faculty members working at Georgia Southern University. In 2011, there were 10 faculty members working at GSU. This number includes visiting scholars as well as tenure track instructors. With two exceptions, all are married with children, raising the number of this contingent to 37 members. However, this group consists almost exclusively of non-church goers who do not participate in church-based social networks. Most own their own homes and the group gets together often for dinner parties or tennis⁴. Their children are friends and play together, away from the adults, during these gatherings. Without exception, the children are fully bilingual and are high achievers in school.

One couple in particular from the faculty group had tried in the past to build social ties with the Claxton Poultry workers. When I interviewed the couple, they explained it thusly, “We have tried on a number of occasions to invite some of the poultry workers over for dinner. For whatever reason, they never come. I think that they

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⁴ An interesting aside: Without exception in Statesboro, both male and female faculty members play tennis and poultry workers play golf.
are maybe a little ashamed of their situation” (Interview, 7/18/11). The lack of interaction between the poultry workers and the faculty members is another example of potential social capital (i.e. access to individuals with a wealth of knowledge about education in the US) squandered. While the disparity between socioeconomic status and religion may account for the disconnect, a missed opportunity remains the end product.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter presented a description of how the church functions within the Korean immigrant community of Statesboro. As the majority of the workers at Claxton Poultry are Protestants, the church functions as both a hub for socializing and a place of worship. The church offers a source of spiritual solace in the face of an extremely challenging situation while at the same time helping maintain ethnic traditions. However, the findings run counter to much of the literature concerning Korean churches in the United States. Unlike the typical portrayal of Korean Protestant churches, the Korean Mission in Statesboro does not provide many of the services and advantages available in more traditional host communities. The short-term nature of their stays in the church prohibits the formation of internal bonding necessary for the transition to external bridging social capital. Individuals who are well connected can enhance opportunities to obtain better education, training, and skill and knowledge credentials. However, in the case of the Korean community in Statesboro the tendency is for Claxton Poultry workers to rely upon human capital (i.e. a high level of education from the Korean system) to navigate school life in Statesboro on their own rather than seek support from other Koreans.
Equally, despite a growing literature exploring immigrant integration in urban immigrant destinations, few researchers have considered the same dynamics in rural settings. In a study of the significance of adherence to mainline Christianity versus evangelical Christianity, Beyerlein and Hipp (2005) argue that the former is a direct measure of bridging social capital while the latter is a measure of bonding social capital. The upshot being that Protestants and Catholics were more likely to be involved in service to the wider community, and thus interacting outside of their social network, than Evangelicals who tend to focus more on their own religious community. In the case of the Korean Mission in Statesboro, I argue that the characteristics are reversed. The insular nature of their congregation makes the Koreans more focused upon their immigrant community and much less likely to form bridging social capital, thus stymieing interaction with non-Korean parishioners within the First Baptist Church and the community of Statesboro. Future researchers would do well to reassess preconceived notions about the dynamics and permanency of new immigrant communities in the Midwest and southeast. The situation in Statesboro shows that the current literature has room for additions.
CHAPTER 6

IN SEARCH OF THE KOREAN DREAM IN AMERICA

The prevailing literature on Korean immigrants in the United States paints a picture of highly educated, hard working immigrants hell-bent on moving up the social ladder in their adopted homeland. Epithets such as “education fever” (Shim & Park, 2008) or “model minority” (Min, 1995) have been attributed to Korean Americans in academic as well as journalistic circles. However, as with the all-inclusive and overgeneralized moniker of Asians as a pan-ethnic group, truisms about the ethnic and linguistic homogeneity of Korean immigrants in the United States also mask variability within the population. In this chapter, I use the case of Korean poultry workers living in rural Georgia to challenge predominant characterizations of Korean immigrants in the media and academic literature. Because information concerning Korean immigrants in nontraditional host communities is scant, this chapter offers a more nuanced and heterogeneous portrayal of the reasons for Korean immigration to the US that runs counter to more popular representations. First, I provide an overview of the educational motivations for Korean immigration. Second, I offer an explanation of the economic factors influencing their decisions to move. And finally, I conclude with a description of what Korean immigrants are experiencing once they arrive in the small town of Statesboro, Georgia and what these findings possibly mean for researchers.
Educational Desires and Reality

“Education Fever” is a national preoccupation in Korea (Shim & Park, 2008). The push for academic excellence begins at a very early age and comes with high levels of stress for both parents and children. However, since the Asian economic downturn of the late 1990s access to and affordability of education has decreased for many Koreans, forcing them to search for alternatives. At the same time, English proficiency has become an increasingly valuable commodity in Korea. As a result, the number of Koreans seeking an English-medium education for their children outside of Korea has increased substantially over the last decade. According to the Korean National Statistical Office (2006), the number of Koreans going abroad for study or training exceeded 100,000 during 2005, with a quarter of those headed for the United States. Korea ranked third in US international school and college enrollments at this time, behind India and China (“59,000 Koreans Studying in U.S.,” 2006). However, this high level of competition comes at a price, both for Koreans at home and sojourners.

Unhappiness with Korean Schools

A 2011 study (Youm, 2011) found that the happiness index for Korean teenagers was the lowest among the 23 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Korean social scientists attributed their unhappiness to the pressure on Korean teenagers to score high marks at school and the cutthroat competition to enter topnotch universities. As one mother in Statesboro put it, “Yeah, I love Korea but I felt guilty about their education.” (Interview, 4/4/11). The historic roots of the competitive nature of education in Korea can be traced to Confucianism. The Confucian ideals adopted by Koreans in the late 1300s held education
as the way to maintain social order and stability. Education was seen as virtually the only way individuals could improve their social status. These ideals persisted into the Twentieth Century with the creation the nationwide public school system and national examinations devised to create a meritocratic hierarchy (Haboush, 1991). And as Robison (1991) points out, the emphasis on education in post-war Korea preceded the country’s rapid economic takeoff. The strong belief that education can enhance social mobility persists; Koreans now spend a large portion of their savings on educating their children (Kim, 2010).

Motivations for education. What motivates parents to send their kids to college in any country? From an economic perspective, as long as college graduates have a wage premium over what high school graduates earn, or as long as the private return to investment in college education is greater than that of other investment opportunities available to high school graduates (Paulsen, 1998), then the economic monetary benefits are worth the investment. Until the early 1980s, Korean higher education appeared to produce results similar to that of the United States. In the US, earnings differentials between college and high school graduates as well as the difference in the unemployment rate for the two made getting a college education a logical investment (College Board, 1999). This held true in Korea as well. For example, Korean male college graduates earned 41% more than high school graduates in 1983 (Park, 1984). However, the situation started to change in the late 1980s. According to the Korean Labor Research Institute (1994), earnings of college graduates decreased from 2.14 times that of high school graduates in 1985 to 1.53 times in 1993. The rate of return on an investment in education, which estimates the monetary benefits of education after considering the
amount of money invested in education (Kim, 2002), decreased as well. In 1985, the private rate of return for Korean high school graduates was 7.6%, in contrast to 14.8% for college graduates. In 1994, this was reversed to 8.1% for high school graduates compared to 6.9% for college graduates (Ghong & Baek, 1994). The decrease in the rate of return on college education in Korea occurred in concert with labor market conditions; higher education in Korea expanded rapidly in the 1980s, which in turn brought an over-abundance of college graduates into the labor market (Kim, 2002). In 1994, 52% of college graduates and 48% of junior college graduates were employed in jobs that required less education than they had (Uh, 1994).

Economically, it would be logical to stop investing in higher education if the expected returns were lower than the amount invested. Conversely, the 18-year-old college enrollment rate in Korea, which was 16% in 1980, rose to 49.3% in 1994—a significantly higher rate than the 32% for the US and 35% for Japan during the same period (Korea Research Institute for Congressman, 1996). This “Education Fever” (Seth, 2002) coincided with the deteriorating economic situation in Korea at the time\(^5\) to create the impetus for emigration and a search for educational alternatives.

**Monetary concerns.** In the media and academic reports, a standard narrative has developed about who Korean immigrants are, why they come to the US, and what they bring with them. Similar to other East Asian immigrant groups in the United States, the new Korean Americans are one of the most highly educated immigrant groups. According to Census data (US Census, 2010), 52.9% of all Korean Americans aged 25 years and over have at least a Bachelor’s degree, compared with 27% of European

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\(^5\) The World Trade Organization, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund intervened in 1997 to help stabilize the flailing Korean economy. The restructuring of the economy following the intervention negatively affected the large middle-class (Chomsky, 2010).
Americans and 48% of Asian Americans. However, a close examination of the data reveals a disjunction between educational attainment and income for Korean Americans. While Asian Americans have household and personal income levels that exceed those of any other racial demographic ($67,022), the median family income for Korean Americans in 2010 was $50,316, while the national median household income was $50,046 (US Census, 2010). These figures support the argument that “contrary to the popular image of Korean Americans as a success story, they have not attained income parity with whites or with other major Asian groups” (Hurh, 1998, p. 53).

Additionally, Korean newcomers often experience occupational downward mobility. Due to the language barrier and the insular nature of the Korean American community, many have been unable to transfer their prior work experience and knowledge into the US labor market. For example, a study by Min (1984) found that of small business owners in Atlanta, Georgia, nearly 70% had a college degree and 75% had held white-collar positions or professional occupations prior to immigration. It is therefore not surprising that Korean immigrants see education as the only way up the social ladder for their children. Sue and Okazaki (1990) explain:

Upon arrival in the US, immigrants encounter a relatively open education system and abundant educational opportunities on the one hand, and “blocked” mobility on the other. This reality not only reaffirms their belief in education but also fosters apperception of education as the only possible means for social mobility (p. 17).

Interviews reveal that the newcomers to Statesboro hold these same beliefs about mobility in many regards. Similar to Zhou and Bankston’s (1998) study of Vietnamese
American students, a relatively high average of achievement among Korean students in Statesboro has been maintained by cultural values that are conducive to achievement and by bounded social networks that maintain these values. Yet, underlying the expected characterizations of Koreans striving for social mobility through education lie additional motivations for immigrating.

**A different kind of “Wild Goose Family”**. The extraordinary emphasis that Koreans place on educational development is the product of traditional Confucian attitudes towards learning and status, new egalitarian ideas introduced from the West and the “complex and often contradictory interaction between new and old ideas” (Moon, 2011, p. 164). A striking element of this trend is the “wild goose family” in which the father stays behind in Korea while the mother goes abroad with the children for the sake of their education (Kim & Greene, 2003). While many Korean parents decide to live separately; there were an estimated 40,000 goose fathers in 2008 (Onishi, 2008), the majority of the workers at Claxton Poultry come to the US as a nuclear family. The nature of their work agreement allows permanent residency for the entire family, a luxury rarely afforded to other educational sojourners.

However, the high rate of exodus at the end of their one-year contract with Claxton Poultry attests to the view that Statesboro has little to offer Koreans in the way of upward mobility. With regard to education, the short nature of their stay in Bulloch County schools make anything other than a quick introduction the US school system difficult for the poultry workers and their children. While education does play a role in their decisions to immigrate, other factors are equally as important in their decisions to leave Korea and start anew in the U.S. The case of Korean children enrolled in Bulloch
County schools runs counter to existing literature focused on traditional host communities. The following section further illustrates how their situation, currently an anomaly, could possibly be a harbinger of things to come with regards to Korean immigration.

**Alternative Motivations for Immigrating to Statesboro**

Although they did not start arriving until 2005, the participants in this dissertation began applying for jobs with Kukjei Immigration Development Corporation (KIDC) as early as 1999. In contrast to the Korean economy at the time, the state of Georgia enjoyed economic growth in the first half of the 2000s (factors that appear favorable to potential new residents). Additionally, Georgia is one of the ten states with the largest Korean American populations. In 2010, an estimated 52,000 Koreans lived in the state, further increasing the appeal of moving to Georgia (US Census, 2010).

Interviews with Claxton Poultry workers revealed that the parents of school-aged children were frustrated with education in Korea. Most of the participants interviewed for this dissertation voiced the opinion that the school system in Korea was too competitive and too expensive. The quality of the knowledge being conveyed in Korean schools was praised. However, all saw the “pressure cooker” nature of the competition, and its consequences for their children, as a negative and one of the reasons behind their decision to emigrate. In addition to these views on education were also deep feelings of unhappiness with the restrictive nature of Korean society and a desire to escape the hierarchy of the workplace. The Korean immigrants that I interviewed in Statesboro, both male and female, were seeking a space where they could be individuals with more autonomy than they were afforded in Korea. This goal was sometimes limited to the male
head of the household; another tradition with roots in Confucianism, but not always. In the following section, I provide interview data that support my claims. But first I believe a description of the Korean workplace is pertinent for understanding the poultry workers’ motivations.

**A Brief History of Labor in Korea**

The rapid economic growth of Korea in the years following the Korean War has been referred to as “The Korean Miracle” (Chang, 2008). In contrast to Western capitalist societies, Korea developed its economy without overtly individualistic values and institutions, depending instead on collectivist norms and authoritarian forms of organization and management, legacies of Confucian tradition (Kim & Park, 2003). A fervent nationalism promoted by the government helped mobilize Korean workers in an all out effort to raise exports and bring Korea out its dismal circumstances after the 1953 armistice ending the Korean War. Overcoming the destruction of infrastructure, factories, mines, and other manufacturing facilities, Korea raised itself from half the per capita income of Ghana in 1960 to become one the world’s leading industrial societies using these methods (Chomsky, 2010).

Traditional Confucian customs looked down upon manual labor and education was regarded as the highest virtue (Kim, 1982). However, the post-war Korean government undertook a massive propaganda campaign that identified both industrial labor and economic objectives with national aspirations. As Kim and Park (2003) explain, “The call for industrial participation stipulated that those who work hard achieve financial and social success, while bringing prosperity and honor to the company and country” (p. 41). The government and industry-sponsored ideology of work maintained
that everybody had to participate voluntarily in the national project. Low incomes, difficult working conditions and overtime were needed to in order to modernize the country. The government assured workers that harsh conditions were to be temporary (Bae, 1989).

Themes of harmony, solidarity and cooperation among employees were common company mottos or slogans of the vast majority of Korean companies (Janelli, 1993). But the call to work hard for national purposes started to lose its appeal among workers in the early 1980s. When political scandals became public, multiple labor strikes took place and civil unrest resulted in violent demonstrations in Seoul during the summer of 1987. Under extreme pressure because of the upcoming 1988 Olympic Games to be held in Korea, then president Chun Doo Hwan was forced to implement a number of democratic reforms. However, the Korean workers’ attitudes towards work were altered; “Their sense of identity is no longer primarily based on work and jobs” (Kim & Park, 2003, p. 46). The economic crisis of 1997 exacerbated the situation, further motivating Koreans to search for alternatives. As Koo (2007) explains, “Economic inequality in South Korea has grown significantly over the past decade, and the growing disparity is manifested in every aspect of social life from consumption patterns and lifestyle to residential segregation and educational opportunities” (p. 1). Many of the Koreans in Statesboro began the application process to work at Claxton Poultry in the late 1990s, coinciding with the beginning of the social inequality issues.

In Korea, there is no day off. When discussing their motivations for moving to the US, the members of the Korean immigrant community in Statesboro were very forthcoming with their answers. The discussions centered on education in the beginning.
However, many participants revealed more when pressed about their reasons for leaving Korea. When I asked Brian about his motivations for moving to the US, he was very straightforward with his answer:

Yeah. There are two reasons. One is for myself. I wanted to move to the United States. I just wanted that. In Korea, there is no day off. I went to work around 6:30 am and I got home around 9:30 or 10 at night. And the second reason is for my kids. I believed that they could have more chances to learn and some opportunity when they graduate (Interview, 5/5/11).

Rita, the wife of a poultry worker, elaborated upon the nature of the Korean society and its affects on her husband’s wellbeing:

Americans are different from Koreans in that Americans don’t care about what other people are doing, but Koreans live in a small world. They are very close and connected to other people. So, whenever he did something, he was very bothered by people around him. For example, he graduated from a prestigious university but if he didn’t have a good job people around him criticized. It’s a common thing. He said he really didn’t like it. So he came here to avoid others’ eyes. Do you see him wearing a short haircut like a monk? He said he always wanted to do that (Interview, 5/4/11).

May, the wife of a poultry worker and friend of Rita, added:

Here my husband spends lots of time with the family. In Korea, during the weekends, lots of husbands sleep, sleep, sleep because during the five days that they have to work, they have to work again after work by drinking with their coworkers. Yeah, that’s part of work. But here they don’t have to do it.
On the weekends he wakes up at 7am and takes a walk together with the kids (Interview, 5/4/11).

**Liberated Korean women.** While the stories of Korean men anxious to escape the harsh nature of the workplace are revealing, interviews in Statesboro revealed much about Korean women as well. Bettie relayed her story concerning a newfound sense of freedom after moving to Statesboro. She arrived in 2008 with her husband and two sons; one is now a student at Georgia Southern University and the other is in the twelfth grade. Her husband moved to Atlanta at the end of his one-year contract after finding a job at a major Korean grocery and Bettie decided to stay in Statesboro until her son graduates from high school. They see one another on the weekends. Bettie found a job at a local dry cleaner and has been working for the first time in her life for almost a year. When I asked her about the experience, she answered:

> When I was in Korea, my life was devoted to everyone else. But now I live my life for myself. I really like it. There I had to be tied to my husband, his family, and my kids and never had my time. Although the work is difficult at the cleaners, I like my job because this is my work and I get my own money out of it too (Interview, 5/12/11).

When asked about her social life, Bettie admitted that she does not have many friends because they have mostly left Statesboro. However, she felt that for the first time in her life, she was making decisions on her own terms. Considering the fact that Korean social structures are male oriented due to the influence of Confucian philosophy (Nam, 2010), actions by women such as Bettie are atypical. As Min (2001) points out, “Koreans are one of the few immigrant groups who experience a high level of discrepancy between
women’s increased economic role and persistence of traditional gender role attitudes” (p. 303).

From the interview data, it appears that many of the poultry workers want to escape the social pressures of life in Korea in conjunction with their desire to improve their children’s educational options. However, while the Korean parents in Statesboro do experience newfound freedoms in the US, many of the difficulties inherent in being an immigrant newcomer hinder the educational experiences of their children. Equally, some do not find the educational system in Bulloch County to be what they had envisioned before moving to the US. While the poultry workers do feel validated in their decisions to immigrate in certain regards, many aspects of life in Statesboro do not fulfill their dreams. In the following section I will discuss how, running counter to the “model minority” (Min, 1995) stereotype, the pursuit of education is stymied during some of the poultry workers’ short stays in Statesboro.

Korean Parents’ Experiences with Education in Statesboro

A number of paradoxes became evident in the analysis of the findings. The aforementioned personal motivations of the parents were surprising. But also of interest were the opinions of the Korean parents concerning the educational system in Bulloch County, a key selling point of Kukjei International Development Corporation. Although the majority of the parents were unhappy with the ultracompetitive nature of schooling in Korea, some were equally unhappy with what they encountered in Statesboro. Dianne revealed that her expectations changed once she arrived:

Yeah, I had my dreams for them. But I came here and looked around and decided to let go of my greed. At first, I came here thinking of my kids being doctors,
lawyers. But I realized that this is not good. I want them to feel free and do what they want (Interview, 3/31/11).

When I asked Jo if she and her husband were satisfied with their children’s school, she replied:

Yes and no. We are satisfied with the fact that it is almost stress free and they can be an active agent to choose what they want to do, what they pursue. But at the same time, we are not sure about the quality and the level of the education. Korean students are forced to learn lots of things at a high level. It is not as rigorous here as it is in Korea. We are not sure if what they are getting now is going to pay off in the end (Interview, 8/27/11).

May was much more frank when I asked her opinion of her teenaged daughter’s new school; “It’s a joke” (Interview, 5/4/11). While May was the most blatant in her opinion of schooling in Bulloch County, parents were largely unimpressed with the academic rigor of the schools. At the same time, most parents had very little interaction with the teachers or the school their children attended.

**Parental involvement**

During an interview with Joseph, he relayed to me a conversation that he had with the teacher of his eleven year old son:

I went to my son’s school for parent/teacher conferences. The teacher was very polite and was patient with my English skills. She had good things to say about my son’s progress in school. But she also had some advice. She told me that she was a little frustrated with the Korean parents. She said, “It’s not enough to just put them on the yellow school bus in the morning and send them to us. Sure, they
will adapt and learn eventually. But, you have to be involved. You can’t just send them to us and leave it at that.” I could tell that she was frustrated with the way we try to deal with the language barrier. And you know, she’s right. We want our kids to learn English and push them hard to do all of that, but we aren’t willing to do it ourselves (Interview, 8/27/11).

Joseph’s story captured the essence of what I interpreted to be the most vital disconnect between the Korean parents’ vision of education for their children in the US and the actuality of what was happening in Statesboro. While the parents wanted their kids to have less stress and experience a “normal” childhood on the one hand, they were not providing the interaction with the schools that researchers find so vital for academic achievement.

Parental involvement in education takes place in several contexts—the home, the community, and the school (Muller, 1995). Kim (2002) found that English proficiency influences school contact; “English proficiency was strongly related to their school participation, indicating that parents who were more fluent in English tended to have more frequent school contact” (p. 533). The Korean poultry workers in Statesboro arrived for the most part with very little English language experience. Although most studied English in middle and high school, listening and speaking is not a major part of the school curriculum in Korea. Most graduated high school with a basic understanding of grammar, but little in the way of speaking skills. The predominant Southern accent in Statesboro further complicated matters of communication. The resulting disjunction between parents and schools is a subject that both teachers and Koreans raised in the interviews. The language barrier affected not only parent/school relationships, but the
ability of the parents to help their children with homework as well. The following story
relayed to me by John, a poultry worker and father of two, is an example of the
consequences of such disconnects.

Vignette

John and his wife Yu are in their early 30s. They moved to Statesboro in April of
2011 from a suburb of Seoul. John works at Claxton Poultry and Yu is a stay at home
mother. They have a son in kindergarten and a daughter in the second grade. Neither the
kids nor the parents spoke English well when they arrived, although John spoke a small
amount due to a short stay in Australia before his marriage. I interviewed John and his
wife the week after they arrived in Statesboro. They had a hard time getting settled and
enrolling their kids in school because of the language barrier. However, they were
hopeful about the future. John explained their difficulty when trying to help their son
with homework. As parents, they did not have the language skills necessary to assist with
tasks at the kindergarten and elementary school level, nor did they have friends to whom
they could ask for help.

John and Yu came to my home in August, four months later, for a follow-up
interview. Although they were generally upbeat upon arrival, both became distraught
when I asked how school was going for their kids. In hushed tones, their son was on the
couch nearby watching television, John explained to me how the kindergarten teacher
had decided to hold their son back for one year rather than letting him advance to the first
grade with his peers. John and his wife were both obviously hurt by this decision and did
not fully understand why this had happened. They had no one to advocate for them and
their son could not understand what was happening either. The friends that he had made
in his short time in Statesboro were moving on and he was staying in kindergarten for one more year.

John and Yu understood the stigma that is attached to kids who are held back a grade. Their tones and body language revealed their frustration and pain. Their son was starting his academic career with a strike against him and their American dream was not playing out as they had hoped. However, cultural norms prevented John and Yu from reaching out for assistance or protesting. Shon and Ja (1982) describe the critical importance of obligation in Asian societies where maintaining face and avoiding shame play key roles in one’s social status and where the nature of one’s relationship with in-group members defines one’s identity. In a small, tight-knit community such as the Korean immigrant population in Statesboro, situations such as John and Yu’s prove to be difficult to negotiate. As a result, their son was forced to repeat kindergarten and they struggled to put their experiences thus far in the US into perspective.

Kim (2002) concludes that parents’ English proficiency is heavily associated with children’s educational achievement. Interviews and observations in Statesboro revealed that the level of English of the majority of poultry workers is minimal at best. As Muller (1995) points out, “Korean-American parents may be reluctant to participate in their children’s school activities due to linguistic/cultural barriers, and they may seek to compensate for this through home-based parental involvement, which is less likely to be constrained by these factors” (Muller, 1995, p. 85). This may be the case for some parents in Statesboro. For John and Yu, however, limited English skills negate the ability to become involved at home as well. As this section illustrates, the Korean parents in Statesboro, while eager to participate, oftentimes do not have the skills necessary to bring
their desires to fruition. And while it is assumed that Bulloch County schools would also like to see the parents more involved, barriers exist that prohibit more than cursory interaction with Korean parents.

**Chapter Conclusion**

The tendency to generalize about immigrant ethnic groups is not unique to Asians. And while generalizations can be made about broad groups in specific times (e.g. Why did the Irish immigrate in the 19th century?), individual circumstances can be unique. The Korean immigrants working at Claxton Poultry immigrated to the United States in search of deliverance from social, economic and educational structures rife with extreme competition and pressure. Counter to popular portrayal of the model minority stereotype, eager to make a go of it in their new surroundings, the Korean immigrants in Statesboro waiting out their one-year commitment at Claxton Poultry with stoic resolve are more akin to refugee populations.

There is some truth to the research concerning “education fever” (Shim & Park, 2008) in Korean populations living abroad. However, the situation in Statesboro proves unique in that the poultry workers are not in search of a better education for their children in Bulloch County schools. Their sojourner status provides relief from the highly competitive school system in Korea, yet the Koreans newcomers in Statesboro were of the opinion that better opportunities existed in other cities. The implications are that researchers concerned with Korean immigrants in nontraditional host communities should reconsider what they assume are the motivations for moving to a particular location. To advance our understanding of Korean immigrants, expectations for parental
participation in schools and civic institutions should reconsider changing trends in this population.

In closing, although certain aspects of the current literature on Korean immigrants continue to hold true, the present study shows considerable variability. Korean parents continue to make extreme sacrifices with the goal of a better future for their children. However, the methods used to achieve their goals are changing as traditional options become less viable. The locations in the United States where Koreans now settle are becoming equally as diverse. Variability within this immigrant population may be more complex than has been previously argued.
CHAPTER 7

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This study explored the underlying factors affecting the exchange of social capital among Korean immigrants in Statesboro, Georgia. The purpose of this study was to investigate how exchanges of social capital took place within the Korean social networks, as well as with natives of the area, with the overarching goal of better understanding how these exchanges benefit the immigrants’ school-aged children. This ethnographic case study conceptualizes the formation of Korean immigrant social networks in Statesboro as well as how these networks facilitate the sharing of social capital both among and across social networks.

Grasping how these social networks function requires an understanding of not only the context in which the Korean immigrants live but also the history of the culture from which they come. To ignore the underlying factors influencing their social interactions would possibly lead to misconceptions about the interactions taking (and not taking) place in Statesboro. Equally, the history of education in Korea is important for understanding how the newcomers approach interaction with the schools in Statesboro. Analyzing any one element of the situation in Statesboro without considering its role in the case as a whole places a researcher at risk of misinterpretation. What follows are the findings from this study.

How Global Economic and Political Forces Shape New Immigrant Communities
Factors in the United States pulled Koreans into the jobs at Claxton Poultry while circumstances in Korea simultaneously pushed them out. Heightened immigration enforcement in the United States during the early 2000s affected the meatpacking and poultry industries, influencing the search for alternative sources of cheap labor. At the same time, Korea was experiencing upheaval in the middle-class due to backlash rooted in the Korean economic crisis of 1997. Facilitated by immigration brokers in Seoul, dozens of Koreans (both men and women) applied for one-year contracts at Claxton Poultry in exchange for permanent residency.

The relationship between Korea and the United States is convoluted, with this case being only one of many tortuous connections. In many ways, the economic trajectories of the two countries intersect, overlap, and mirror one another. While the United States enjoyed the post-World War II economic growth that facilitated the expansion of the middle class, Korea struggled to rebuild after the 1953 armistice. The massive effort by the Korean people to develop their own middle-class faltered with the economic collapse of the late 1990s. Economic reforms imposed by the World Bank and IMF severely hampered the dreams of many Korean households. Arriving in the United States just before the “Great Recession”, the Koreans find themselves in a precarious position.

The sacrifices and risks taken on by the Korean immigrants coming to work at Claxton Poultry are great. Leaving family and friends, moving to a foreign country with no definite plans for the future, and agreeing to work manual labor (a first for many) under dangerous conditions for little pay indicate the desperate nature of their decisions to emigrate. Similar to the motivations of most immigrants, the participants interviewed
for this study voiced the desire to find good education for their children, meaningful work that allowed a comfortable lifestyle, and the freedom to live life according to their own inclinations. Serving as a surrogate form of cheap labor in the poultry industry, the Koreans help perpetuate the very sort of economic system they are trying to escape in their home country. By agreeing to exchange one year of work in exchange for permanent residency, the Koreans make such practices more appealing to companies such as Claxton Poultry. Rather than raising wages in order to attract workers, the meatpacking and poultry industry (as well as construction and many other industries) rely on immigrants with little bargaining rights to boost corporate profits. It remains to be seen if the Korean immigrants’ efforts will be fruitful.

**Gaps in the Much-vaunted Korean Immigrant Social Capital**

The short-term nature of the Koreans’ tenure at Claxton Poultry prohibits the development of bonding social capital amongst themselves as well as bridging social capital with the members of the First Baptist Church. Because the majority of the poultry workers leave immediately following their one-year commitment, a second generation of Koreans in Statesboro has yet to become established. Likewise, long lasting friendships never materialize amongst the Koreans themselves. The confidence needed in order to make the eventual transition to interacting with native members of the First Baptist Church, and eventually others in the community, fails to come to fruition. The resulting disconnect insures that members of the Korean Mission rely upon human capital (i.e. a high level of education from the Korean system) to navigate school life in Statesboro on their own rather than seek support from other Koreans or members of the First Baptist Church.
In Korean culture, the concept of *jeong* refers to a type of special interpersonal bond that has no clear translation in English. The term covers a wide range of English terms: feeling, empathy, affection, closeness, tenderness, pathos, compassion, sentiment, trust, bonding, and love (Kim, Kim, & Kelly, 2006, p. 152). Jeong is the essential element in human life that promotes the depth and richness of personal relationships. As Kim (1994) relates, jeong is what makes us say “we” rather than “I,” “ours” rather than “mine” (p. 19). A necessity for the cultivation of jeong is time spent together. While the workers at Claxton Poultry all have the shared experience of having toiled together for one year at the processing plant, the brief nature of time spent together prohibits anything more than perfunctory relationships at both the workplace and the Korean Mission.

**New Immigrant Communities as Ephemeral**

The short nature of the one-year commitment to Claxton Poultry results in a number of difficulties in addition to the development of social capital. Because the poultry workers do not stay in Statesboro at the end of their contracts, the population is constantly in flux. Having obtained permanent residency for themselves and their family, the majority of the Korean workers leave immediately following the termination of their employment. For many, the quick move was part of the plan from the beginning. Before arrival in Statesboro, the majority of the participants interviewed had already decided that the time spent in south Georgia would be temporary. While only a few expressed definitive goals for the future, staying in Statesboro was not on the list of possibilities.

What the case of the Korean poultry workers in Statesboro illustrates is a challenge to prevailing research and theory regarding Korean immigrants. While the search for a quality education as well as financial success does account for many of their
journeys, the juxtaposition of their economic backgrounds to their status as poultry workers highlights the uniqueness of the situation. As of this writing, the program bringing Koreans to work at Claxton Poultry was in its seventh year of recruiting. Dozens of families have come and gone in this time. Yet, the initial gains made in the first years have reached a plateau and the social networks show little potential for providing more than cursory benefits. What Claxton Poultry affords is legal admittance to the US. However, Statesboro provides little more than an entry point for the eventual pursuit of the American Dream in another location.

**Implications**

*For immigrant studies*

The findings in this study should warn researchers that generalizing about ethnic communities is hazardous. First, although ethnic communities can potentially serve as agencies for social capital, empowering marginalized individuals and groups within institutions, this is not guaranteed. Most of the Korean immigrants in this study were actively involved within the Korean Mission at the First Baptist Church. However, while that institution did offer certain benefits such as religious solace, missing were some of the other more popularly reported facets of Korean ethnic churches. In particular, Korean language classes for the children were not present. Additionally, a strong relationship between the Korean Mission and the First Baptist Church did not exist. Researchers such as Lew (2007), Zhou and Bankston (1998), and Zhou and Kim (2006) have written about the benefits of ethnic enclaves. What is lacking in their portrayals of these communities is a more in depth look at how stronger bonds between ethnic churches and schools can be facilitated.
Additionally, researchers concerned with immigrants settling in non-traditional host communities would do well to avoid assumptions about the immigrants’ motivations for being in certain locations. The characteristics of the Korean immigrants in Statesboro are more similar to those of refugee populations than traditional immigrant groups in the same region. Although they are moving to the US based upon reasons other than war or political persecution, the Korean participants in this case study come to Statesboro with the understanding that their stays will be short in nature. The transient nature of their existence affects the relationships with their Korean peers as well as the host community. Understanding this phenomenon could better inform plans for future services and community outreach.

**For schools**

It is important that administrators and teachers examine their notions of parental involvement. Generalizations about Koreans as members of a pan-Asian ethnic “model minority” group that have no difficulties with the educational system of the US do a disservice to this diverse population. Hurdles such as the language barrier and cultural norms that discourage interaction with teachers become more difficult when the immigrants in question are also sojourners. A more in depth understanding of the dynamics within the Korean immigrant community’s social networks could facilitate better programs for involving parents in their children’s education in spite of these conditions. Schools need to be aware of cultural differences among parents and provide culturally relevant ways to involve parents in and outside of the classroom.

Equally, Korean parents are involved with their children’s education in ways that may differ from what is expected in the US. By reassessing their assumptions about
parental involvement, school staff can build upon the strengths of Korean parental participation in their children’s education that takes place in the home. Understanding the parents’ perspectives about education requires educators to move away from white, middle-class interpretations of parent participation and instead to carefully examine the various dimensions and dynamics of participation as defined by Korean parents (Lee, 2005). Such a reassessment would benefit not only Korean immigrants, but other immigrant groups as well as any parents who do not fit into the stereotypical mold of a parent active in their child’s education.

**Future research**

It is my belief that this dissertation reveals the need for much future research. With the continual rise of English language learners in U.S. schools, the creation of relationships between schools and immigrant families is of great importance, especially in nontraditional host communities. The arrival of immigrants to rural areas of the United States has changed the dynamic of many communities in the past decade. I believe that a better understanding of how social networks function within these immigrant communities is essential to garnering trust and facilitating parental involvement in schools. Equally, educators should be made aware that these families arrive with “funds of knowledge” (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) that could benefit all students and parents. Developing strategies for tapping into these resources begins with understanding how to get the parents involved.

Another area for future research is the link between economic factors and immigration. The inextricable connection between the world economy and large numbers of people leaving their homelands to come live in the United States must be explored if
researchers desire a better understanding of these immigrant groups. Parsing what pushes groups out of the sending community versus what pulls them into the receiving community provides information vital to making immigrants integral elements of society. To ignore these factors perpetuates consternation and exclusion.

Lastly, this study points out that there is a great need for more research concerning rural schools and English for Speakers of Other Languages. The area of distance learning as a resource for the professional development of in-service teachers in rural areas is a subject that holds much potential for increasing the availability of ESOL endorsement classes. Having worked in an online environment for the past two years, I have come to realize the utility of distance learning. I believe that investigation of more ways to make this option available to a wider audience perhaps not accustomed to such methods of learning is warranted.

**Closing Vignette**

The abrupt departure of Reverend Kim left the congregation at the Korean Mission in an awkward position. Left without a pastor, the Koreans were forced to interact with the members of the First Baptist Church in order to form a search committee. Inroads are being made as multiple meetings have taken place between members of both congregations. Additionally, the Southern Baptist Convention has planned a trip to North Korea in 2012. The Korean Mission in Statesboro is preparing a farewell song presentation and meal for the members of the First Baptist Church who will be a part of the upcoming trip. And while it is business as usual at Claxton Poultry, cross cultural exchanges are being made in Statesboro that appear to be the beginnings of the
bridging social capital necessary for the sharing of resources across different backgrounds and ethnicities.
References


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol for Korean Parents (adapted from Dorner, 2003)

General Background Information

Could you tell me about your…

1. family in the Statesboro area. (Who lives with you in this house; how long have you lived in the U.S.?)

2. work/job/daily life here in the U.S. (What is a typical day like for you; for your spouse?)

3. family in your native country. (Who; last time you saw them; how/how often do you communicate; where do they live; what’s it like?)

4. schooling in your native country. (What was your child’s schooling like; how many years total; exposure to English classes?)

5. family in the Statesboro area. (Who lives with you in this house; how long have you lived in the U.S.?)

6. work/job/daily life here in the U.S. (What is a typical day like for you; for your spouse?)

7. family in your native country. (Who; last time you saw them; how/how often do you communicate; where do they live; what’s it like?)

8. schooling in your native country. (What was your child’s schooling like; how many years total; exposure to English classes?)
Views on Schools/Education

1. Please tell me about your children’s schools. Where do they go now? What grade are they in now?

2. Have they ever attended other schools? If so, where? What were they like? Did you choose any of these schools? If so, how, why? If not, why not?

3. How do you register kids for school? Tell me about the first time you went to the school. How did you know what to do?

4. Who helped you, if anyone, with the registration process?

5. Before you had children/before you came to the U.S., what did you expect the schools would be like? Why did you think that? (TV, friends, families, kids, etc.)

6. Who did you talk to, if anyone, about what to do once you arrived in Statesboro? Was this in Korea or after arriving in the U.S.?

7. Who do you talk to now about concerns you may have with schooling in Statesboro? How do you normally communicate?

8. Do you interact with your children’s schools, teachers, administrators? How (through parent-teacher conferences, PTA, phone calls, report-card pickup)? Do you ever contact them? Why? What’s it like (example)? Do they ever contact you? Why? What’s that like (example)? Would you like the contact (amount, type) to be different? How? Why?

9. Is this different than what would happen in Korea? Is so, how?

10. Do the schools send home information? About what? In English, Korean? What do you usually do with it? Could you give me an example?
11. Tell me about your children’s language education. What type of English language classes do they have? For how long now?

12. What is ESOL at your kid’s school like? (How did you learn this?)

13. What do you hope for your children? What effects do you think schooling has on their futures? (College? Job opportunities? Probe for examples.)

Views on Schools/Education

14. Please tell me about your children’s schools. Where do they go now? What grade are they in now?

15. Have they ever attended other schools? If so, where? What were they like? Did you choose any of these schools? If so, how, why? If not, why not?

16. How do you register kids for school? Tell me about the first time you went to the school. How did you know what to do?

17. Who helped you, if anyone, with the registration process?

18. Before you had children/before you came to the U.S., what did you expect the schools would be like? Why did you think that? (TV, friends, families, kids, etc.)

19. Who did you talk to, if anyone, about what to do once you arrived in Statesboro? Was this in Korea or after arriving in the U.S.?

20. Who do you talk to now about concerns you may have with schooling in Statesboro? How do you normally communicate?

21. Do you interact with your children’s schools, teachers, administrators? How (through parent-teacher conferences, PTA, phone calls, report-card pickup)? Do you ever contact them? Why? What’s it like (example)? Do they ever contact
you? Why? What’s that like (example)? Would you like the contact (amount, type) to be different? How? Why?

22. Is this different than what would happen in Korea? Is so, how?

23. Do the schools send home information? About what? In English, Korean? What do you usually do with it? Could you give me an example?

24. Tell me about your children’s language education. What type of English language classes do they have? For how long now?

25. What is ESOL at your kid’s school like? (How did you learn this?)

26. What do you hope for your children? What effects do you think schooling has on their futures? (College? Job opportunities? Probe for examples.)

Interview Protocol for Administrators and Teachers

General Background Information

1. Could you tell me how long you’ve been working in the Bulloch County public school system?

2. Are you from this area?

3. Have you ever lived anywhere else?

4. What grades and subject area do you teach?

5. Do you have any Korean students in your classes?

6. Does having Koreans in the classroom change the dynamic in any way?

7. Do you have much interaction with the parents of your students?

8. How do you communicate with parents who may not speak English?

9. Have you had any difficulty in this area? If so, how?
10. Does the administration of your school help facilitate communication with non-
English speaking parents? If so, how?
CONSENT FORM

Consent Form for Parents

I, _________________________________, agree to participate in a research study titled "COLLABORATIVE BOWLING: SOCIAL CAPITAL IN A SOUTH GEORGIA KOREAN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY" conducted by Charles A. Lynn from the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia (912 245 1853) under the direction of Dr. Linda Harklau, Department of Language and Literacy Education, University of Georgia (706 542 4526). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at anytime without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to explore the role of social capital in the sensemaking process of Korean immigrants in Statesboro, GA with regard to public education. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1) Answer questions about my immigration to Statesboro, GA, my views of the public school in which my child is enrolled, and how I obtained information about the school, which will take approximately one hour.

The benefits for me are that I may gain a sense of accomplishment knowing that I may be helping future immigrant groups.

No risk is expected. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed and then destroyed or modified to eliminate the possibility that study participants could be identified. My information will be safeguarded against reading from individuals not associated with the study. The interview will be arranged at a time and location of my convenience.

I will receive a $20 gift certificate for answering questions. I will receive a $10 gift certificate for any follow up interview.

No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission. I will be assigned an identifying number and this number will be used on all of the questionnaires I fill out.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on 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 Date

Telephone: _________________
Consent Form for Teachers and Administrators

I, ______________________________, agree to participate in a research study titled "COLLABORATIVE BOWLING: SOCIAL CAPITAL IN A SOUTH GEORGIA KOREAN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY" conducted by Charles A. Lynn from the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia (912 245 1853) under the direction of Dr. Linda Harklau, Department of Language and Literacy Education, University of Georgia (706 542 4526). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at anytime without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to explore the role of social capital in the sensemaking process of Korean immigrants in Statesboro, GA with regard to public education. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

2) Answer questions about my role as an educator in Statesboro, GA, my perspective on school experiences with immigrants in the area and how local schools interact with Korean immigrant parents and students, which will take approximately one hour.

The benefits for me are that I may gain a sense of accomplishment knowing that I may be helping future educators and immigrant groups.

No risk is expected. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed and then destroyed or modified to eliminate the possibility that study participants could be identified. My information will be safeguarded against reading from individuals not associated with the study. My information will be safeguarded against reading from individuals not associated with the study.

I will receive a $20 gift certificate for answering questions. I will receive a $10 gift certificate for any follow up interview.

No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if it is necessary to protect my welfare or if required by law. I will be assigned an identifying number and this number will be used on all of the questionnaires I fill out.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on 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 | Date
--- | --- | ---
Telephone: ________________
Email: __________________________

Name of Participant | Signature | Date
--- | --- | ---

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

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu