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## **Border Pedagogy And The Acculturation Of Korean Students In U.S. Institutions Of HigherEducation**

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BORDER PEDAGOGY AND THE ACCULTURATION OF KOREAN STUDENTS IN U.S.  
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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A dissertation

Presented to

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Indiana State University

Terre Haute, Indiana

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Randy Green

August 2010

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed at identifying learning and teaching strategies that can promote the process of acculturation for Korean students in institutions of higher education in the United States. In particular, the study attempted to pinpoint ways in which these students and their instructors can become aware of and resist educational tendencies and approaches that promote hegemony and devalue cultural perspectives and experiences as well as construct meaning within the context of a worldview that is influenced by both Korean and U.S. cultures. It was hoped that the identification of these skills and strategies would aid both students and instructors in developing the ability to become successful *border crossers*, as defined by Giroux's (2005) border pedagogy, as well as culturally enlightened citizens of the global community.

The study was qualitative in nature and consisted of a series of interviews with six South Korean students (three undergraduate and three graduate) enrolled in a mid-sized institution of higher education in the U.S. Midwest, six U.S. faculty members at the same university who had had Korean students in their courses, and four faculty members from Korea who were teaching at the university. A review of the literature included an examination of Positivism and its role in U.S. education, border pedagogy, particularly as it relates to international education and the process of acculturation, processes of cross-cultural adaptation, studies that have been conducted about South Korean students at U.S. institutions of higher education, historical influences on Korean higher education, and teaching and learning strategies common in South Korean universities.

The study was able to identify several teaching and learning strategies that were interpreted as encouraging the process of acculturation and enabling students to *cross borders*. These strategies appeared to be supportive of the empowerment of and dialogue between students and teachers and strove to incorporate the cultural perspectives of both parties into the teaching and learning process. The study also identified a number of practices and perceptions that appeared to promote the assimilation of these students. In particular, there was little evidence that suggested the participants had reflected on or resisted influences and educational tendencies which could possibly promote the process of hegemony. The development of strategies that combat this tendency and facilitate a *demystification* of the educational process is recommended.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### **Introduction**

“As ‘globalism’ raises its Hydralike nest of heads, one thing is for sure: this moment, this juncture, feels monumental” (Jardine, 2008, p. ix).

The real challenge is to face the truth that no one tradition can say everything that needs to be said about the full expression of human experience in the world and that what the global community requires, more than anything else, is mutual recognition of the various poverties of every tradition, now revealed by globalization in unprecedented ways and in new degrees. (D.G. Smith, 2008, p. 26)

### **Responses to Globalization**

In the postmodern, post 9/11 world, high-speed, mind-boggling advances in technology as well as highly publicized world events such as the War in Iraq have both enabled and forced the community of nations to become increasingly interconnected and inter-reliant. “The phrase *global village* has been clichéd,” claims Gaudelli (2003), “yet the extent of globalization is vast and real, for well and for ill. The food we eat, the clothing we wear, the air we breathe, the fuels we consume, and the media we watch are intertwined with global connections” (p. 3).

Facilitating this internationalization, claims Friedman (2006), are ten recent events and phenomena in politics, business, and technology that have, in essence, made the world “flat.” These occurrences, which include the collapse of the Berlin Wall, widespread availability and

use of the Internet, workforce software, and personal digital devices as well as the corporate practices of outsourcing, off shoring, and open sourcing, have brought about what the author calls a “triple convergence” that has “enhanced horizontal collaboration across the globe” (Friedman, 2006, p. 48). In addition to a greater level of cooperation and interdependency among various countries of the world, our awareness of each other as human beings has increased dramatically. Now more than ever, we know more about the customs, beliefs, historical development, resources, and economic, political and educational systems and practices of peoples living in every region of the planet, and this expanded familiarity has shaped the way we view ourselves and others and forced us to confront values and practices seemingly at odds with our own.

In 1990 Anderson wrote, “For the foreseeable future, the global culture is going to be one with a thin, fragile, and ever-shifting web of common ideas and values, and, within that, incredible diversity – more diversity than there has ever been” (p. 25). Today, almost two decades later, Anderson’s words ring true, and this *new reality* has encouraged attempts to identify the elements of a *global culture* in which basic truths that transcend cultural boundaries are synthesized and acknowledged, discover “alternative ways of exploring reality and knowledge” (P. Smith, 2004, p. 26), develop the notion of *global intelligence* (Sparoisu, 2004) and promote the ability of individuals to deal with the myriad complexities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in a culturally enlightened and competent manner.

Coming to terms with and finding one’s way in the overwhelmingly diverse, closely intertwined, information-saturated, dynamic postmodern world is a challenge that typically elicits one of two responses. Paul Smith (2004) writes:

On the one hand, there are some people out there who still believe that we can have access to some fundamental and essential reality, an empirical natural world that is theoretically open to our unmediated knowledge if only we persevere long enough. (p. 26)

Standing by the traditional principles of their forefathers and disparaging the type of cultural relativism that seems to avoid committing to any one interpretation of reality, these individuals head into the future with a strong sense of and commitment to the past. On the other end of the spectrum are those who Anderson (1990) says, "...wander around in a muddled good guy liberalism that has no clear concept of truth and think all the world's problems would melt away if we just had a tad more tolerance" (p. 4). For individuals of this persuasion, change, diversity, and exposure to as many other ways of thinking and living as possible are in and of themselves worthwhile.

### **Positivist Approaches to Postmodern Education**

In the United States, one prominent arena in which the battle between these two polarities and the struggle to come to a synthesis of these extremes has been particularly pronounced over the past century has been in the field of education and curriculum development (Kliebard, 2004; Posner, 2004). As Hattam (2008) suggests, "Unsettling times can be seen as a provocation for educators to (re)think what is appropriate curriculum and also to think through pedagogies for unsettling times" (p. 110). Representing one end of the spectrum, educational theorists and critics such as Bloom (1987) and Hirsch (1987) are spokespersons for and advocates of a traditionalist, humanistic brand of ideology that calls for learning to be "tied to the power of reason and the finest elements of the Western cultural heritage" (Kliebard, 2004, p. 23). The role of the schools in this case is functional; educational institutions in the U.S. should focus on transmitting the essential truths and values that help identify us as a people and teach the skills

that enable us to maintain the status quo in a highly competitive global environment (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Feinberg & Soltis, 2004).

The antithesis to this conservative, absolutist response to postmodernism can be seen in a form of *progressivism* that began to emerge in the 1960's (Kliebard, 2004; Posner, 2004).

Heavily influenced by the developmental, pragmatic, and experiential movements in educational and curriculum design theory, educators who adopt this perspective often see practice itself as the *test of truth* (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Kliebard, 2004; Posner, 2004).

With progressives, especially those who trace their lineage to John Dewey, postmodern educators demanded of theoretical knowledge that it demonstrate its relevance to practice, and insisted on the importance of practice and everyday culture for the constitution of theoretical knowledge. (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993, p. 15)

According to Aronowitz and Giroux (1993), postmodern educators have often interpreted this approach to mean that “the curriculum can best inspire learning only when school knowledge builds upon the tacit knowledge derived from the cultural resources that students already possess” (p. 15). The goal in this case is to help students come to an awareness of how academic subject matter relates to their present-day environment, often using elements of popular culture and the media, and recognize that a diversity of perspectives exists. It is assumed that by experiencing and interacting, the learner will most likely derive meaning, and in the *flat world* of the new millennium, this assumption can be interpreted to mean that mere exposure to a plethora of culturally diverse thoughts and ideals is the point of education.

In light of the upheaval and uncertainty that accompanies a cyber-connected, dramatically transforming planet, it is quite natural that individuals respond by either clinging to that which is familiar or indiscriminately embracing all change as natural and healthy. Anderson (1990)

contends, however, that when dealing with issues and dilemmas presently confronting humankind, “These problems are not going to be resolved either by romantic ‘traditionalism’ that seeks to preserve old cultures intact, or by the cheerful globalism that equates interdependency with improvement” (p. 27). What is called for is a postmodern worldview that takes a critical examination of reality as it has been defined, recognizes the dynamic complexities of the present-day environment, and adopts a holistic, multivalent, and dialectical interpretation of what constitutes the various forms of knowledge (Anderson, 1990; P. Smith, 2004).

Applying this new worldview to education in the U.S., a recognition of the ineffectiveness of the Positivist approaches to curriculum design and teacher training that dominated most of the previous century emerges. “Historically, education in general, and the curriculum field in particular, has sought to become more like a science,” writes Apple (1975). “That is, it has sought to pattern its activity on models drawn from modes of endeavor based on objectivity, replicability, the ideal of ‘hard’ rather than ‘soft’ data, and so forth” (p. 123). This tradition, inherited from Immanuel Kant and the European Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, is reliant on what D. G. Smith (2008) labels a type of *knowledgeism*; that is, a manner of imparting facts which assumes that a verifiable Truth exists and that “critical thinking in the name of Reason” leads to enlightenment (p. 6).

Clearly, both the *Back to the Basics* and the *New Age Experiential* outlooks on education in the postmodern world fall within the Positivist paradigm. On the one hand, absolutists like Bloom (1987) and Hirsch (1987) assume that there is a provable reality that can be objectively and systematically transmitted to learners. On the other hand, those progressives who view practical experience as a key element of the learning process often make the assumption that

learning begins with the observable world and a reliance on the scientific method to discover and interpret the environment.

### **Reconceptualism and Border Pedagogy**

In recent years, Pinar (1975, 1988, 2004) and other curriculum theorists have begun to identify what they see as inadequacies in the Positivist approach. “For the sake of precision, clarity, and utility, we have taken to studying that which is observable and, at times it seems, quantifiable. Not surprisingly, this approach omits something” (Pinar, 1975, p. 416). In response to these perceived weaknesses of Positivism, a re-visualization of what meaningful learning in the new millennium entails has emerged, and attempts to reshape curriculum based on a critical understanding of the role of formal education in perpetuating hegemony and means of meliorating subjugation and inequality as well as an enhanced awareness of the dynamic relationship between *oneself* and *others* have become increasingly visible. In particular, both the Phenomenological and Post-structuralist strands of the Reconceptualist paradigm of curriculum theorizing have offered new definitions of education in the postmodern world and guidance to educators who seek to create democratic, inclusive, and *culturally responsive* (Gay, 2000) learning environments and empower those who have been disengaged and marginalized from the educational process. Borrowing concepts from Social Constructivism, Neo-Marxism, and Critical Theory, the various forms of Reconceptualism, which include Socio-political, Moral, Anti-racist, Existential, Feminist, Postmodern and Cultural Theorizing, have sought to merge historical influences and perspectives of teaching and learning with contemporary interpretations of the *lived experiences* of all, the processes involved in the construction of knowledge, the dominant power structures that exist within schools and the world, and mechanisms for

empowering individuals and transforming society (deMarrias & LeCompte, 1999; Feinberg & Soltis, 2004; Pinar, 1975; Posner, 2004).

The term *Reconceptualists* described individuals whose scholarship challenged this (the positivist) tradition – that is, suggested that the function of curriculum studies was not development and management but the scholarly and disciplined understanding of educational experience, particularly in its political, cultural, gender, and historical dimensions. (Pinar, 1988, p. 2)

This paradigm, states Pinar (1975), represents “a synthesis of contemporary social science and the humanities” as well as “a marriage of two cultures: the scientific and the artistic and humanistic” (p. xiv). Within the context of the postmodern world, Reconceptualists have chosen to respond to globalization and other major trends and issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by reinterpreting the elements that constitute effective educational experiences and reevaluating the ways in which those experiences can contribute to positive change in both individuals and societies.

An especially illustrative example of how Reconceptualist principles can manifest themselves in postmodern teaching and learning practices in a manner that is both “transformative and emancipatory” is Giroux’s (2005) *border pedagogy* (p. 25). Based on the theoretical assumptions that the power structures which frame current epistemological, political, cultural, and social margins must be recognized and conditions which enable students to fashion new identities and become *border crossers* need to be created, critical border pedagogy’s ultimate goals are the empowerment of individuals and the promotion of democratic societies (Giroux, 2005). In short:

Border pedagogy points to the need for conditions that allow students to write, speak, and listen in a language in which meaning becomes multi-accentual and dispersed and resists permanent closure. This is a language in which one speaks *with* rather than exclusively *for* others. (Giroux, 2005, p. 21)

The application of this approach to education in the postmodern world enables individuals to resist the tendency to drift to either end of the Positivist spectrum and to adapt a global perspective that is enlightening and uplifting.

### **The Internationalization of U.S. Institutions of Higher Education**

The struggle to come to terms with postmodernism in the educational arena has become even more pronounced as the effects of globalization on institutions of higher education become increasingly apparent. Magrath observes, “If the globalization evident in business, communication, and finance is inevitable, how can universities that have provided so much of the intellectual capital for these developments not be affected – and indeed change themselves?” (as cited in de Wit, 2002, p. 142). The information age implies that humankind is currently “on the road toward a single global marketplace of ideas, data, and communication,” states Muller, and “knowledge as understanding,” which is “the province of the university,” is now more important than ever (as cited in de Wit, 2002, p. 3). To accomplish this goal, universities must adopt an international, intercultural perspective and initiate programs that meet the needs of “globally enlightened” citizens. As McLoughlin (2001) states, “Making learning resources more accessible and relevant to a wide range of learners is a major concern for universities across the world, as we move into the arena of borderless education” (p. 7). This recognition was highlighted in a white paper presented in 2002 by the American Council on Education (ACE) entitled *Beyond September 11: A Comprehensive National Policy on International Education*, in

which extensive reforms in North American higher education in response to the need for a *global competence* were proposed (Spariosu, 2004). These suggested reforms were specifically aimed at bolstering programs that improved students' abilities to interact in multicultural settings.

de Wit (2002) identifies several political, economic, cultural, social, and academic rationales for higher education institutions to internationalize. These justifications include advantages with both national and institutional concerns such as foreign policy, national security, technical assistance, the labor market, economic growth, and competitiveness. Academically, this process can add an international dimension to research and teaching, extend the academic horizon, help with institution-building and networking, and enhance the institution's profile and status as well as the quality of its programs (de Wit, 2002). Developments in communication technologies and transportation have also made the globalization of universities and colleges much more feasible than it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The rapid spread of distance education programs has helped facilitate more cross-cultural collaboration between schools and individuals (Bates, 1999), and the increase in the number of exchange and international development programs (de Wit, 2002) is additional evidence that globalization is changing the way schools view education and conduct business.

In the United States, increasing international student enrollments at institutions of higher learning is further testimony to the fact that schools are becoming more internationalized. According to the Institute of International Education's (IIE) 2009 *Open Door Survey*, a total of 671,616 international students attended U.S colleges, universities or language programs during the 2008-2009 academic year. This represented 3.7% of the total enrollment in these institutions. Of these students, 74,048 were working on associate degrees, 195,826 were in undergraduate programs, 283,329 were enrolled in graduate programs, 51,812 were studying in non-degree

programs, and 66,601 had completed an academic program and were doing internships on Optional Practical Training (IIE, 2009). Despite drops in international enrollment following September 11, the number of international students in the U.S. has steadily increased since the 1950s (IIE, 2009). As host to approximately 22% of the world's international students, the U.S. remains the number one destination for those seeking an overseas education (U.S. Department of State, 2006). This influx of students from abroad has added to the diversity of the student population at U.S. universities (Lieberman & Guskin, 2002) and forced educators to rethink the ways in which they structure and offer instruction and support services.

### **The Case of Korean Students at U.S. Universities**

Presently, one of the largest groups of international students enrolled at U.S. institutions of higher education is from the Republic of Korea (IIE, 2009). According to the Institute of International Education's (IIE) most recent *Open Door Survey* (2009), 11.2% (a total of 75,065) of all international students at universities, colleges, and language programs in the United States during the 2008-2009 academic year were South Korean citizens on non-immigrant visas. This figure, which makes Koreans the third largest population of international students in the U.S. (behind India and China) and represents an increase of 8.6% from the previous year, illustrates the substantial number of Korean students who come to the U.S. for cross-cultural educational experiences each year (IIE, 2009). According to Seth (2005), the interest on the part of South Koreans in receiving a U.S. education can be partly explained by the fact that:

U.S. economic development programs and the close cooperation between some American universities and schools in Korea aided in the migration of students to American universities after 1945. A foreign – especially U.S. – university degree generally held more prestige in South Korea than a degree from a local institution. (p. 13)

Despite the fact that so many Korean students are receiving educations in the U.S., little research aimed at investigating the experiences of this population, especially at the university level, has been conducted (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). Although a number of studies have compared East Asian and Western learning styles and looked at the impact of cross-cultural educational experiences on Asians studying in the U.S. (Au & Entwistle, 1999; Crowe & Peterson, 1995; Entwistle & Entwistle, 2003; Greer & Ng, 2000; Kember, 2000; S. H. Kim, 2006; Kitayama & Markus, 1991; E. L. Lee, 2007; Leung, 2002; Liu, 1996; Sachs & Chan, 2003; Shin & Abell, 1999), comprehensive examinations focused specifically on understanding what college students from Korea go through while attending institutions of higher education in the United States are few and far between. Furthermore, a review of the literature suggests that those studies which have been conducted about this population have by in large stressed cultural or educational differences between the U.S. and Korea or indicated problems experienced by Korean students while in the U.S. rather than offered strategies that will promote the acculturation of these individuals (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yang, 2004; Yook & Albert, 1998). In other words, research done in this area has taken a more Positivist approach in that it has concentrated more on making both U.S. professors and Korean students aware of several of the facts as they are known about relevant cross-cultural issues and suggesting ways that these learners can *westernize* their learning styles (e.g., by speaking more in class, organizing their writing and reasoning style differently, dealing with professors and classmates on a more informal basis, familiarizing themselves to experiential learning techniques, improving their fluency in English) so that they can be more successful within the American educational system. This approach assumes that the goal of education is assimilation, or replacement of one set of cultural values

with another (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999; M. S. Kim, 2002), rather than acculturation, which Jegede and Aikenhead (1999) see as a more multi-dimensional process that allows individuals to incorporate new cultures into existing worldviews.

While calls for the adoption of a Reconceptualist approach that strives to incorporate elements of Korean culture and philosophy into the field of curriculum development in Korea have begun to emerge (Jin, 1993; S. O. Kim, 1983; Y. C. Kim, 2005; Y. Lee, 1995), few educators have discussed how Korean university students can specifically apply the knowledge and skills they gain from their cross-cultural educational experiences to their understanding of the world as influenced by the culture of their home country. Little has been written about how these students can succeed academically in the United States while at the same time gain insight into their own cultural values and the relationship between themselves and others.

The studies undertaken about this population have for the most part neglected to take a critical approach to understanding the ways in which institutions of higher education in the U.S. attempt to assimilate students from other countries, Koreans included, and offer strategies that can assist students in utilizing the skills and learning styles they bring with them and empower them to *transcend cultural borders* (Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999). In short, research on Korean students in U.S. universities has not focused on the acculturation of these learners nor looked at ways in which the principles of border pedagogy can assist in this process.

As world educators advance their understanding of the role that culture plays in the learning process and devise means of helping students, faculty, and school administrators with diverse cultural backgrounds adopt global perspectives, it is vital that the experiences, perceptions and opinions of individuals in the midst of learning in cross-cultural settings be taken into account. If university instructors and advisors in the U.S. are to facilitate meaningful

learning experiences for the Korean students on their campuses and in their classrooms and if Korean students themselves are to have a better awareness of the process they go through when adapting to educational systems in the U.S. and develop approaches that will enable them to have successful academic and cross-cultural experiences, more in-depth research on this group of learners needs to be conducted. This research must not only take an in-depth look at the Korean educational system as influenced by Korean culture but also demonstrate an understanding of the experiences of Korean students who have studied or are studying at U.S. institutions of higher education. Furthermore, in order to overcome the limitations of and build on data presented in previous studies of this population, future research should also investigate the possible role that Border Pedagogy and other strands of the Reconceptualist paradigm might play in promoting the acculturation of these students.

### **Present Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify teaching and learning skills and strategies that can be utilized by a group of Korean students and faculty in an institution of higher education in the United States that promote the process of acculturation. In addition, the study was intended to explore the perspectives of both students and faculty regarding the role that Korean and U.S. cultures plays in influencing educational practices in both countries, common differences between the educational systems and teaching and learning strategies in Korea and the U.S., the cross-cultural adaptation process Korean students go through when studying in the U.S., and the impact that cross-cultural experiences have on both students and faculty. Specifically, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do both students and faculty view the Korean education system and teaching and learning strategies common in Korea as being influenced by culture?

2. How do both students and faculty view the U.S. education system and teaching and learning strategies common in the U.S. as being influenced by culture?
3. What are some cultural differences between Korea and the U.S. that have an impact on Korean students' performance and behavior in and attitudes about their classes in the U.S.? How do both students and faculty perceive these differences?
4. From the point of view of both students and faculty, does the approach the students take to learning or their classroom behavior change over the course of their studies in the U.S.? If so, how does it change? If not, why do they perceive this to be the case?
5. From the point of view of both students and faculty, is success in the classroom best secured by strategies associated with assimilation or acculturation?
6. What strategies are used? How are these helpful or not, and what alternatives would be preferred?
7. Do students feel their cross-cultural experience in the U.S. helps them better understand and deal with the current global environment? If so, how? Do faculty feel their experience working with Korean students helps both students and faculty better understand and deal with the current global environment? If so, how?

In particular, the study was an attempt to pinpoint ways in which this population can become aware of and resist tendencies and approaches existing within their U.S. classrooms that promote hegemony and devalue their cultural perspectives and experiences, construct meaning by using a synthesis of learning styles and strategies they have acquired in the Korean educational system and less familiar styles and strategies they are exposed to in the U.S., and put learning into the context of their worldviews as influenced by both Korean and U.S. culture. It is hoped that the identification of these skills and strategies will aid these individuals and others in

developing the skills needed to become successful *border crossers* as well as culturally enlightened citizens of the global community.

The study, which was qualitative in nature and took a symbolic interaction, ethnographic, and critical theory approach, consisted of a series of interviews with three groups of individuals: six South Korean students (three undergraduate and three graduate) enrolled at a mid-sized institution of higher education in the U.S. Midwest, six U.S. faculty members at the university who had had Korean students in at least one of their classes in the last two years, and four Korean faculty members who were teaching at the university. All student participants, who had been enrolled at the university for a minimum of one year and had a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher, were interviewed to determine their perceptions and awareness of as well as opinions about several issues related to their academic experiences in both Korea and the U.S. in order to identify specific teaching and learning skills and strategies that have helped them “cross borders” and have meaningful learning experiences. Both the U.S. and Korean faculty were asked to ascertain their awareness of the issues related to the cross-cultural educational experiences of Koreans, share their perceptions of the experiences and academic abilities of Korean students, state their beliefs about which specific teaching and learning skills and strategies are most beneficial to this population in terms of facilitating acculturation, and assess their roles as *cultural brokers* in that process.

### **Potential Contribution to the Field**

The results of this study are intended to not only contribute to the existing body of knowledge about the process Korean students go through when studying at U.S. universities but also provide further insight into the understanding of cross-cultural education, the process of acculturation, and the application of border pedagogy in U.S. classrooms in higher education

institutions. Specifically, the study emphasizes teaching and learning strategies that can be used by both students and instructors to promote acculturation, examines the perceptions of students and instructors regarding the role that culture plays in the educational process, applies concepts from border pedagogy to international education, and, by taking into account the viewpoints and experiences of both students and teachers, helps facilitate *dialogue* between both parties.

Although the participants of this study represent one particular culture, it is also hoped that its findings will be applicable to both international students in the U.S. from other cultures, particularly from East Asia, U.S. students, particularly those who have or will have study abroad experiences, and U.S. faculty as they attempt to cope with the educational challenges of postmodernism.

From the perspective of the student participants, the study is intended to shed light on how students view the Korean educational system and common ways of teaching and learning in their native country as well as changes that might have taken place as a result of their experience in the U.S. Information on how the students view the role instructors play in helping them to become successful students, what learning and teaching strategies they feel are the most beneficial to them in this process, whether or not the students feel pressure to assimilate, and how they believe the experience of studying in the U.S. impacts their futures was collected and analyzed. This in-depth examination of the perspectives of this group of students is intended to further understanding of the process international students go through when studying at U.S. universities and colleges and the impact that cross-cultural educational experiences have on individuals.

In an attempt to obtain comprehensive and balanced insight into the issues dealt within this study, the opinions of both U.S. and Korean faculty were also examined. By exploring the

perceptions of these individuals on matters such as the relationship between culture and education, the processes of acculturation and assimilation, educational strategies that enable students to “cross borders,” and their role as facilitators of meaningful cross-cultural educational experiences, it is hoped that the faculty participants’ awareness of each of these areas was enhanced. In addition, by taking into account the observations of both parties in the educational process, it is hoped that this study will serve as a springboard for increased dialogue and mutual understanding.

Moreover, interviewing two groups of faculty, those from the United States and those originally from Korea, adds to the understanding of the issues dealt with in this study. It was assumed that the Korean faculty, all of whom graduated from U.S. universities, not only had a more detailed knowledge of the Korean education system and culture than their U.S. counterparts but also had an in-depth awareness of the experiences of Korean students who are in the U.S. Comparing their responses with the responses of the U.S. faculty can be especially insightful.

The study also intended to specifically and deliberately relate concepts from border pedagogy to the experiences of international students and their U.S. instructors. In particular, questions about whether or not the process of *crossing borders* and the process of acculturation are similar in nature and whether or not strategies suggested by Giroux (2005) can be adapted to the situation of international students in the U.S. was investigated. This knowledge provides a valuable resource to both instructors and students as they struggle to negotiate meaning in a cross-cultural context.

Compared with the wider-scale, macro-level approaches taken by other quantitative and qualitative research which has been conducted about this topic, it is believed that the microscopic

nature of this investigation also provides a more in-depth, intimate look into specific behaviors and interactions as well and linguistic and cultural factors that may impede or promote learning for this population. In addition, the use of native language in interview process was intended to increase the accuracy and depth of understanding of this subject.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Due to the small size of the sample and the fact that the study takes place on only one university campus, the findings of this study should not be generalized to the entire population of Koreans studying in the U.S. It is also recognized that, when interviewing and observing in cross-cultural situations, both language and cultural factors come into play. Despite the fact that the participants in this study were interviewed in their native languages, translating and coding from one language to another, in the case of the Korean participants, increases the probability that misunderstanding and error can occur. Furthermore, different cultural interpretations and perceptions of qualitative research and the interview process might lead to inaccurate representations of reality or misconceptions about the purpose of the study. It was vital that every attempt to represent the objectives and methods of the study was done in a manner that was clear in a multicultural context.

Furthermore, the fact that the chief researcher was an employee of the university in which the study was conducted and could be seen as a figure of authority by the student participants must be taken into consideration. Although it was believed that involving a second researcher to conduct student interviews would somewhat offset this limitation, every attempt was made to ensure the participants that their participation was not obligatory, that their responses would not lead to negative consequences to them as students, and that the study was not being conducted under the auspices of university business.

Another consideration to take into account when analyzing the results of this study is the fact that classroom observations were not conducted as part of the data collection stage. Due to the fact that the study is primarily aimed at collecting the perceptions and opinions of the participants, it was felt that interviewing would be used as the main source of data collection. However, since individuals' behavior sometimes differs from their perceptions and their oral depictions of their actions, future studies of this nature might benefit from adding observations of both students and faculty in the classroom to the information obtained for purposes of the study.

Finally, because the students were asked to give their honest opinions about much of what was occurring in their classes at the university and faculty were asked to give their perceptions of Korean students they have had in class, it was possible that both parties would be concerned that the researchers might share their responses with the other party. This concern might have affected the way they responded. To offset this possibility, all participants were reassured of the fact that their responses would be confidential.

### **Definition of Key Terms and Concepts**

An understanding of several key terms and concepts used in this study is necessary to fully comprehend the study's purpose, results, and implications. These terms include: "Korean students at U.S. institutions of higher education," "U.S. faculty," "Korean faculty," "culture," "assimilation" and "acculturation."

For the purposes of this study, "Korean students at U.S. institutions of higher education" are defined as full-time students with citizenship from the Republic of Korea (South Korea) who are attending universities and/or college in the United States on F-1 (student) non-immigrant visas. Students originally from Korea who had immigrated to the U.S. or are on other non-immigrant visas were not considered in this study. The term "U.S. faculty" in this study was

used to identify full-time professors at U.S. universities who were U.S. citizens and not of Korean origin. “Korean faculty,” on the other hand, were fulltime professors at U.S. universities who were currently or had been citizens of the Republic of Korea. The distinction between U.S. and Korean faculty was made to identify two different groups of faculty participants interviewed in an attempt to bring different perspectives to the examination of this topic.

It is also important to note that the author of this study viewed “culture” as a dynamic, multidimensional and contextual process that influences individuals as they create meaning within their own evolving socio-cultural contexts (Hall, 1977; Hollins, 1996; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000; Pai, Adler, & Shadiow, 2006) rather than a set group of clearly-defined, non-changing rules and values shared by a particular society or group of people. From the perspective adopted by the author, culture is a “roadmap in an evolving journey” (Saravia-Shore & Arvizu, 1992, p. xxvii), a *medium* (Hall, 1977) and “a river bed that creates its own form and direction over time due to a variety of influences” (Saravia-Shore & Arvizu, 1992, p. xxvii).

Two processes of cross-cultural adaptation discussed at length in this study are “assimilation” and “acculturation.” “Assimilation” is used to describe a process wherein an individual’s cultural views are supplanted by those of another culture and which leads, in short, to the formation of a *new identity* (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999; M. S. Kim, 2002). “The goal of the assimilation process is complete absorption into the new culture. The assimilation model sees the acquisition of another cultural identity as a one-way process,” states M.S. Kim (2002, p. 144).

The process of acculturation, on the other hand, aims at enabling individuals to actively modify their existing cultural perspectives or frameworks based on contact with a *new culture* (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Hong et al., 2000; Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999; M.S. Kim, 2002; Pai et

al., 2006). M.S. Kim (2002) explains, “Acculturation is a multifaceted process that refers to individual changes over time in identification, attitudes, values, and behavioral norms through contact with different cultures” (p. 142). Implied in this phenomenon, maintain Jegede and Aikenhead (1999), is the notion that people can *borrow* or *adapt* certain aspects of the new culture and incorporate them into their current worldviews; in this case, previously held cultural perspectives do not need to be supplanted or replaced.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Review of the Literature**

In order to get a thorough, holistic understanding of the issues addressed in this study, a review of the literature that deals with this topic must not only examine key concepts of Positivism and its role in U.S. education, border pedagogy, particularly as it relates to international education, and processes of cross-cultural adaptation but also look at studies that have been done about South Korean students at U.S. institutions of higher education. To more fully comprehend this population, an examination of Korean culture, especially as it has influenced the Korean educational system, curriculum development, and educational viewpoints and practices must also be included. Research that is particularly relevant in this regard includes an investigation of some of the major historical influences on Korean higher education and teaching and learning skills and strategies common in South Korean universities.

#### **Positivism and U.S. Education**

Originally inspired in part by ideals that guided the Industrial Revolution and concepts taken from Social Darwinism, the Positivist paradigm in curriculum theorizing seeks a strict application of the scientific method to the development of curriculum and the instruction of students (Kliebard, 2004). Implied in this approach is the notion that knowledge is absolute and obtainable and can be imparted to students after an analytical examination of the elements that constitute teaching and learning. Within the Positivist framework, states Giroux (1981):

The foundation for knowledge is drawn from two sources: the empirical or natural sciences, and the formal disciplines such as logic and mathematics. In this scheme knowledge consists of a realm of ‘objective facts’ to be collected and arranged so they can be marshaled in the interest of empirical verification. (p. 43)

Significant strands of positivism in the U.S. have included Humanism and Social Behaviorism, and though Experientialism and Reconstructionism are often seen as attempts to break free of a total reliance on empirical means of viewing the teaching/learning process and the role of schools in society, elements of the Positivist perspective are also evident in both these latter movements (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Feinberg & Soltis, 2004; Kliebard, 2004; Posner, 2004).

Representative of a Humanistic approach to Positivism is Bloom (1987). In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom venomously condemns the *openness* that has led Americans to avoid making judgments of truth but has instead reinforced meaningless notions of relativism and equality. As the process of globalization accelerates and our exposure to other cultures magnifies, the shared certainties that once united us as a people have unraveled, we adopt an overly optimistic view about progress in which “the truth unaided always triumphs in the marketplace of ideas,” and we are left without a firm foothold in an ever-shifting universe (Bloom, 1987, p. 28).

A man needs a place and opinions by which to orient himself. This is strongly asserted by those who talk about the importance of roots. The problem of getting along with outsiders is secondary to, and sometimes in conflict with, having an inside, a people, a culture, a way of life. A very great narrowness is not incompatible with the health of an

individual or a people, whereas with great openness it is hard to avoid decomposition.

(Bloom, 1987, p. 37)

In U.S. universities, maintains Bloom (1987), an overemphasis on the positives of diversity has left students rootless and unable to articulate their beliefs. “The best they can do is point out all the opinions and cultures there are and have been” (Bloom, 1987, p. 26). The 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education provided even more ammunition for conservatives such as Bloom, and recent programs such as *No Child Left Behind* and the current widespread adoption of federal and state-mandated high-stakes standardized testing can be seen as the direct results of calls for a curriculum shaped and controlled by political and corporate agencies in a manner that reemphasizes traditional core subjects and ideals and reinforces notions of an *us versus them* mentality based on fixed definitions of national identity (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Giroux, 2005; Posner, 2004). Central to this approach are subject matter, examinations that monitor and track students (Posner, 2004), and teachers who tend to utilize the lecture-recitation method or other instructor-centered pedagogical techniques. Freire (1970/2003) describes this as the *banking model of education*, in which the role of the teacher is to convey his or her interpretation of the truth to the student. Not only is the goal of instruction in this case to provide learners with one authoritative version of reality but it also is aimed at methodically preparing younger generations for their future roles in society much in the same manner a factory efficiently produces goods for the marketplace. Kliebard (2004) labels this functionalist approach to education the Social Efficiency movement in curriculum design.

As opposed to those in the Positivist camp who are concerned with transmitting fixed cultural values to future generations and thereby maintaining some semblance of the status quo,

other Positivist educators, many of whom have been strongly influenced by Dewey (1910/1997), have focused on deriving meaning from practical experiences. By putting students at the center of the learning process and engaging them in problem-solving techniques that are guided by the scientific method of investigation, Dewey's (1910/1997) *pragmatic experimentalist* approach argued for the need to begin with the psychological and move to the logical (Marshall, Sears, & Schubert, 2000). Dewey (1910/1997) stated, "Since the *concrete* denotes thinking applied to activities for the sake of dealing effectively with the difficulties that present themselves practically, *beginning with the concrete* signifies that we should at the outset make much of *doing*" (p. 139). From this initial experience, a problem is identified and filtered through a systematic process of cognition that, ideally, leads to theoretical understanding (Dewey, 1910/1997).

Bolstered by the findings of the Progressive Education Association's *Eight Year Study* (circa 1933-1941) and other extensive reports at that time which indicated that students from schools that adopted more progressive, experimental methods appeared to outperform or at least do as well as students from schools guided by more traditional curricula, Dewey (1910/1997, 1916/1980), Tyler (1949), and others of the experiential, developmental mold were able to play a substantial role in shaping the U.S. education system in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Kliebard, 2004; Marshall et al., 2000). Schwab (1970), a later supporter of *positivist empiricism*, proposed that the field of curriculum design rely on methodical, scientific analysis and deliberation.

Comparing this stance with that of the *absolutists*, Schwab states:

The end or outcome of the theoretic is knowledge, general or universal statements which are supposed to be true, warranted, confidence-inspiring . . . The end or outcome of the practical, on the other hand, is a decision, a selection and guide to possible action.

Decisions are never true or trustworthy. Instead, a decision (before it is put into effect) can be judged only comparatively, as probably better or worse than alternatives. (p. 4)

The notion that learning begins with a real-life experience and follows a logical path of inquiry is one that is deeply engrained in many modern day educators, who are familiar with both experiential-based projects and the promotion of pragmatic thinking skills; even instructors who do not tie educational experiences to the development of critical cognitive skills and higher forms of comprehension, choosing instead to concern themselves primarily with *the act of doing*, can be said to have roots in Positivism.

### **Border Pedagogy and International Education**

Concerning the effect that the Positivist mode of thinking has had on education in the U.S., Giroux (1981) writes:

As the fundamental false consciousness of our time, the positivist mode of rationality operates so as to undermine the value of history and the importance of historical consciousness in other significant ways. First, it fosters an undialectical and one-dimensional view of the world; second, it denies the world of politics and lacks a vision of the future; third, it denies the possibility that human beings can constitute their own reality and alter and change that reality in the face of domination. (p. 45)

Border pedagogy, according to Giroux (2005), is one attempt within the Reconceptualist paradigm to combat these deficiencies. Based on the assumption that “the borders of our diverse identities, subjectivities, experiences, and communities connect us to each other more than they separate us, especially as such borders are continually changing and mutating within the fast forward dynamics of globalization” (Giroux, 2005, p. 7), this postmodern approach promotes teaching and learning that is multidimensional, dynamic, demystifying, and empowering.

If one is to *cross borders*, it is imperative to first identify and understand what is meant by *borders*. Anzaldúa's (1987) explanation helps in this regard. "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge" (p. 3). The ability for individuals to transition smoothly from one side of a border to another, to create spaces that obliterate dividing lines between people, and, in the end, to erase borders themselves is what border pedagogy strives to accomplish.

Several interrelated themes central to border pedagogy are highlighted by Giroux (2005). The first of these is the importance of identifying and understanding the role that culture plays in the learning process. In this case, "culture is not viewed as monolithic or unchanging, but as a shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experiences, and voices intermingle amid diverse relations of power and privilege" (Giroux, 2005, p. 24). In addition, as Bruner (1996) suggests, both the anthropological "macro" definition of culture as "a system of values, rights, exchanges, obligations, and power" as well as a "micro" view that "examines how the demands of a cultural system affect those who must operate within it" must be taken into consideration in order to fully comprehend the relationship between culture and individuals (p.11).

The view that culture is dynamic, multidimensional and contextual is not exclusive to Reconceptualist theories such as border pedagogy. Social Constructivists such as Vygotsky (1934/1986) and Bruner (1966, 1986, 1996) have focused on how individuals create meaning within their own evolving socio-cultural contexts, and educational theorists like Hall (1977), Hollins (1996), Hong et al., (2000), and Pai et al. (2006) have described culture as constructed and fluid rather than fixed and finite. From this perspective, culture is seen as a "roadmap in an evolving journey" (Saravia-Shore & Arvizu, 1992, p. xxvii), a *medium* (Hall, 1977) and "a river

bed that creates its own form and direction over time due to a variety of influences” (Saravia-Shore & Arvizu, 1992, p. xxvii). By redefining the meaning of culture and its significance for each individual, both teachers and students are able to focus more on *culturally valued knowledge* (Hollins, 1996) and take part in a type of *cultural remapping* (Giroux, 2005) in which they can put learning experiences into context and *break free* from traditional boundaries and forms of authority.

Second, implicit in border pedagogy is the concept of *demystification* of the educational process and a discovery of the forces that promote hegemony and subjugation (Giroux, 2005). This notion, which is deeply embedded in Critical Theory and has historical ties to The Frankfurt School of the 1920’s to the 1950’s, involves a realization of the role schools play in transmitting values and ways in which dominant groups use education to maintain the status quo (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). Gramsci (1929/1992), who is credited with coining the term *hegemony*, played an particularly important role in increasing awareness of the ways in which those in power make use of social institutions to create consensus and discourage change. According to deMarrias and LeCompte (1999), “He (Gramsci) used the term *hegemony* to describe the process by which the worldview of the dominant state maintains control through the socializing activity of institutions” (p. 29). Although dominant groups can subjugate the disenfranchised in this manner, Gramsci (1929/1992) also maintained that individuals can become aware of the forces that oppress them and actively construct new forms of knowledge. Freire (1970/2003) describes this process as “a constant unveiling of reality” in which the contradictions in a person’s life are revealed and “an emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” (p. 81) occurs.

In problem-posing education (as opposed to the banking model of education), people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and

in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (Freire, 1970/2003, p. 83)

Once this awareness emerges, individuals are in a position to take the steps necessary to “develop a counter discourse to the established boundaries of knowledge” (Giroux, 2005, p. 22).

Third, critical border pedagogy goes beyond revealing the ways in which dominant groups seek to reproduce various forms of “dehumanization” (Freire, 1970/2003) and oppression. It strives to empower individuals and enrich lives. “As individuals learn to identify the contradictions that affect their lives,” write deMarrais & LeCompte (1999), “they also become aware of the forces that oppress them. With growth in awareness, they can begin to transform their lives” (p. 27). In order to do this, students are involved in creating their own texts and investigating the complexities of their own histories (Giroux, 2005). This is more, however, than “simply opening diverse cultural histories and spaces to students. It also means understanding how fragile identity is as it moves into borderlands crisscrossed within a variety of languages, experiences, and voices” (Giroux, 2005, p. 26).

Finally, Freire’s (1970/2003) notion of “dialogue” between instructor and learner is a key element of Border Pedagogy. In traditional forms of instruction, the teacher is seen as the “depositor” of knowledge and the student as a passive recipient. In “liberating education,” on the other hand, “The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students” (Freire, 1970/2003, p. 80). In other words, writes Gramsci (1929/1996), “One should not attach importance to lectures but rather to the detailed work of discussion and the investigation of problems, in which everybody participates, everybody contributes, and in which everybody is simultaneously teacher and student” (p. 19). In this sense, education becomes a “collateral learning” process (Jegade & Aikenhead, 1999) that results from

a partnership or collaboration between teacher and student. The instructor takes on the role of facilitator or “cultural broker” (Stairs, 1995) and the learner is an active participant in the educational experience. According to Giroux (2005), this redefinition of the roles of teacher and student opens up opportunities for educators to “deepen their understanding of the discourse of others” and to become “border crossers” as well (p. 26).

Relating the concepts of this approach to international education, it is clear that enabling students to “cross borders” in the manner which Giroux (2005) describes is supportive of the process of acculturation. Whereas assimilation insists on a one-sided Positivist interpretation of what constitutes knowledge and encourages a mindset that is closed and non-inclusive, acculturation, as defined by Jegede and Aikenhead (1999), provides the means by which individuals can not only make sense of all they are learning within the framework of their own cultural perspectives but also view the educational process as enlightening and uplifting.

Of particular relevance for international students who are studying in the United States is Giroux’s (2005) contention that, “Border Pedagogy opens up the possibility for incorporating into the curriculum cultural and social practices that no longer need to be mapped or referenced solely on the basis of the dominant models of Western culture” (p. 24). Instead of relying entirely on Western teaching strategies and interpretations of subject matter, which in many cases may be in conflict with what international students are familiar with, acculturation as promoted by Border Pedagogy encourages learners to make use of the cultural resources and learning styles they bring to the table and develop an understanding that represents a synthesis of different approaches. By stressing that new concepts should be tied to prior knowledge, Border Pedagogy steers both instructors and learners away from what Reagan (2000) terms “cultural and epistemological ethnocentrism” based on Western paradigms in the fields of education,

psychology, philosophy and communication and opens the door for non-Western worldviews and perspectives to be incorporated into the discussion (p. 31).

The proper use of Border Pedagogy not only “offers the opportunity for students to engage the multiple references that constitute different cultural codes, experiences and languages” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993, p. 118) but also builds an understanding of the role that education can play in sustaining the dominance of one group over another and gives students a “voice” in resisting this dominance. The recognition of this fact enables both international and domestic students who are at U.S. universities and colleges to solidify and articulate objections they might have to the manner in which schools and the political and/or corporate entities that seek to sway or control the educational process advocate nationalistic agendas that marginalize other cultural viewpoints. Writing of one perception of the United States in the postmodern environment, Giroux (2005) states:

As the United States increasingly imprisons more of its poor youth of color, rings the globe with military bases, transforms agencies for immigration into those of homeland security, and expands the imperatives of empire in a reckless invasion and occupation of Iraq, the signs of a highly militarized society become more visible than ever. In a post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world, American power is being restructured domestically around a growing culture of fear and a rapidly increasing militarization of public space and culture. (p. 2-3)

According to Giroux (2005), higher education in the United States has been greatly influenced and manipulated by the forces that represent this “neo-conservative” mindset. With this in mind, it is vital that educational institutions resist this trend and provide students the means to make decisions accordingly. This includes university students in the U.S. on F-1

(student) or J-1 (exchange) non-immigrant visas, who, through an awareness of the ways in which schools attempt to transmit certain social values and the role the U.S. currently plays in the global arena, are empowered to put what they are learning into the context of their own cultural backgrounds and oppose attempts to assimilate them to *the American way of thinking*. By encouraging learners to view themselves in terms of others, asking them to dispose of preconceptions and the belief that they alone hold the standard by which reality is judged, and making them partners in the learning process, border pedagogy enables both students and instructors to construct meaning and act upon this new understanding in a manner that is truly cross-cultural in nature, resistant to forces that promote hegemony, and relevant to the needs of global citizens in the postmodern world.

### **Processes of Cross-Cultural Adaptation**

The manner in which institutions of higher education assist their international student populations in adapting to living and studying in the U.S. can also be indicative of which side of the Positivist versus Reconceptualist debate schools and educators fall on. An examination of three processes of cultural adaptation – enculturation, assimilation, and acculturation – and the ways in which universities and colleges in the U.S. facilitate these processes provides insight into the school’s approach to education in the postmodern world.

Enculturation, in the words of Pai et al. (2006), is “the process of learning one’s own culture” (p. 39). Gollnick and Chinn (1990) describe this process as one that involves “acquiring characteristics of a given culture and generally becoming competent in its language” (p. 8). Undoubtedly, for humanists such as Hirsch (1987) and Bloom (1987), who are concerned with the transmission and preservation of particular cultural values, enculturation is one of the keys to successful learning experiences. A certain level of *cultural literacy* (Hirsch, 1987) is required

for traditional structures and identities to be maintained, and formal education is the major arena in which this literacy is cultivated. Relating this concept to classroom learning, Jegede and Aikenhead (1999) state that enculturation occurs when the culture of the classroom is in harmony with the “pupil’s life-world culture” and “is characterized by smooth border crossings” (p. 3). For those involved in cross-cultural educational experiences, this means that when there are little or no conflicts between what students are learning in the schools of their *adopted countries* and what they are familiar with in their *home countries*, the process of enculturation occurs.

When conflicts between *classroom culture* and *life-world culture* do exist, however, either assimilation or acculturation can take place. In the case of assimilation, an individual’s cultural views are supplanted by those of another culture which leads, in short, to the formation of a *new identity* (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999; M. S. Kim, 2002). “The goal of the assimilation process is complete absorption into the new culture. The assimilation model sees the acquisition of another cultural identify as a one-way process,” states M. S. Kim (2002, p. 144). Jegede and Aikenhead (1999), in their work with science education, write that this process can result in alienation of the student from their “home culture” and impede smooth crossings between what students are being taught and what they are experiencing outside the school.

When the culture of science is generally at odds with a pupil’s life-world, science instruction will tend to disrupt the pupil’s worldview by trying to force that pupil to abandon or marginalize his or her life-world concepts and reconstruct in their place new ways of conceptualizing. This process is assimilation. (Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999, p. 3)

As opposed to assimilation, the process of acculturation aims at enabling individuals to actively modify their existing cultural perspectives or frameworks based on contact with a *new*

*culture* (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Hong et al., 2000; Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999; M. S. Kim, 2002; Pai et al., 2006). M. S. Kim (2002) explains, “Acculturation is a multifaceted process that refers to individual changes over time in identification, attitudes, values, and behavioral norms through contact with different cultures” (p. 142). Implied in this phenomenon, maintain Jegede and Aikenhead (1999), is the notion that people can *borrow* or *adapt* certain aspects of the new culture and incorporate them into their current worldviews; in this case, previously held cultural perspectives do not need to be supplanted or replaced. Similar to the manner in which Piaget (1970, 1976) maintains that the process of *accommodation* works as one of the main processes that lead to shifts in cognitive development, acculturation based on the introduction of new experiences can lead to modifications in cognitive structures or schemes that enable humans to synthesize previous knowledge with new information (Crain, 2004; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2004; Smith & Ragan, 2005). The contention that previously learned concepts should be integrated with, not replaced by, newly introduced concepts is one that finds widespread support in both cognitive development and constructivist learning theories (Novak, 1998). “Meaningful learning results when the learner chooses to relate new information to ideas the learner already knows,” writes Novak (1998, p. 19). Aikenhead (1997) describes this process as *autonomous acculturation*, in which students’ pre-existing schemata is modified depending upon the relevance of new material and concepts to the “pupil’s cultural identity and life-world” (p. 218). For those involved in cross-cultural learning experiences, this means that understanding which is actively created as a result of a synthesis between learning that takes place in the *new culture* and learning which has been influenced by an individual’s *home culture* is the most significant and relevant (Hong et al., 2000).

If the goal of border pedagogy, as Giroux (2005) claims, is to enable both students and teachers to make meaningful border crossings by identifying existing forms of cultural and political hegemony in the educational setting, integrating previous views of the world with these new interpretations, and re-envisioning the manner in which learners can use this enhanced awareness to make positive individual and social changes, then this postmodern educational approach is most definitely supportive of the process of acculturation as defined by Jegede and Aikenhead (1999). Whereas assimilation insists on a one-sided interpretation of what constitutes knowledge and encourages a mindset that is closed and non-inclusive, acculturation as facilitated by border pedagogy provides the means by which individuals can view the educational process as multidimensional, holistic, and dynamic and make sense of all they are learning within the framework of their own cultural perspectives.

### **Historical Influences on Higher Education in the Republic of Korea**

For both instructors and students taking part in cross-cultural educational experiences, a basic understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the participants in the teaching and learning process is an important starting point if meaningful learning and true acculturation is to occur (Archer, 1994). Any study of Korean students in U.S. universities and colleges must therefore involve an examination of various aspects of the Korean educational system and historical factors that have influenced learning in this country.

According to J. K. Lee (2002) of the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), the major historical factors which have influenced modern universities and colleges in Korea came from China, primarily through Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian teachings, from Japan, during their occupation of the country from 1910 to 1945, from the West, initially by Christian missionaries, and from nationalistic movements that arose in the country following World War II.

This is not to imply, as Cumings (2005) points out, that the Korean culture and formalized education in particular were simply borrowed from other parts of the world or that Korea did not have an influence on other countries as well; however, systems of thought and political and historical developments taking place outside as well as inside the peninsula all played significant roles in shaping Korean society, institutions, and beliefs. Of these influences, traditional Chinese religious and philosophical thought have the deepest roots in Korean history and culture. A brief review of the history of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism in the Korean peninsula as well as some of the major concepts from these three belief systems related to teaching and learning provides insight into present day Korean institutions of higher learning and students in the context of traditional Korean culture.

Chinese thought and culture have played a substantial role in impacting the development of formal education in Korea (Cumings, 2005; S. O. Kim, 1983; J. K. Lee, 2002; K. B. Lee, 1984; Oberdorfer, 2001; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Seth, 2005; Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1983). Dating back as far as 1100 B.C., when Kija, a scholar and elder brother of the last ruler of the Shang dynasty in China, first came to the country and began teaching Chinese classics to the Korean royal court, Chinese ideas about education have helped shape the Korean educational system. There is also evidence that Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, which were introduced to the country by the Chinese, had a noteworthy influence on Korean society even before the Three Kingdoms Period (57 B.C. – 66 A.D.). “Buddhism and Confucianism had a significant impact on formal and informal elite education in the early Korean states and still remain important” (J. K. Lee, 2002, p. 68). Taoism, on the other hand, “has affected internal and external life” of the Koreans (J. K. Lee, 2002, p. 68). While Taoism and Buddhism have emphasized and attended to the spiritual needs of humans, Confucianism has focused on social

and civic ethics. At times vying with each other for dominance within society, the three religions/philosophies eventually affected an accommodation (Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1983), and over the centuries, a fusion of principles from each has created more unified, balanced guidelines and approaches to living.

**Taoism.** Taoism is officially reported to have come to Korea in 624 B.C., when Emperor Kao-tsu of the Tang Dynasty in China sent a Taoist priest to the court King Yongnyu (of the Koguryo Kingdom) to introduce some of the major Taoist principles and convert the Korean elite to the religion (Grayson, 2002; K. B. Lee, 1984). From that point forward, reports Grayson (2002), “The philosophical system has had an important but indirect influence on Korean thought” (p. 51). Although never taking the form of an organized autonomous religion or philosophy in the country, Taoist thought had an impact on the Korean people and society throughout the imperial dynasties. In particular:

Taoist thought, especially the concept of the *Tai-chi* and the *Yin-Yang*, helped to shape the thought of Chu Hsi (1130-1200), the Sung Dynasty Confucian scholar whose system of philosophy came to dominate Korean Confucian thinking during the Chosun Dynasty. (Grayson, 2002, p. 51)

During the Silla Dynasty (57 B.C. – 935 A.D.), Koreans first received a copy of the *Tao Te Ching*, and a number of scholars traveled to China to study Taoist classics. The religion enjoyed its greatest popularity in the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392 A.D.), especially under King Yejong (1105-1122), but by this time, many of its principles had become intermixed with and were indistinguishable from Buddhist philosophy. The Taoist influence continued throughout the Chosun or Yi Dynasty (1392-1910); Taoist literature was popular among intelligentsia; literati, monks, and private scholars (*sarim*) and women practiced meditation and inner alchemy

(*danhak*), but the influence of Confucianism had taken center stage at that point, and both Taoism and Buddhism were relegated to a lower status (Grayson, 2002; J. K. Lee, 2002; K.B. Lee, 1984).

Of the three most prominent strands of traditional East Asian thought, Taoism is the most ancient. Founded by the poet-sage Lao Tzu (604-531 B.C.), Taoism stresses the development of the inner self and promotes “a simple, spontaneous, and meditative life close to nature” (Ozman & Craver, 2003, p. 104). In the *Tae Te Ching*, the concept of *Tao*, roughly equivalent to “path” or “way” or “nature of things” in English, is introduced. Hopfe (1991) writes, “Though the Tao is defined as ‘the way,’ it is most often compared to a stream or a moving body of water as it progresses endlessly and inexorably” (p. 214). Those who are open to and follow *Tao* are in touch with the ways of the universe and live in a state of perfection and harmony.

An important concept at the heart of Taoism is *wu wei*, literally translated as “non-action.” This notion does not imply inactivity, however; rather it is a call to refrain from doing that which is unnatural or not spontaneous. Spariosu (2004) elaborates:

*Wu wei* implies, on the one hand, noninterference with the natural process that is Tao and, on the other hand, engagement in actions that are consonant with it. Thus, the art of *wu wei* consists in both letting nature take its course and acting in accordance with its processes. (p. 120)

This encourages quiet, meditative reflection before action. Lao Tzu (c.a. 490 B.C./1955) writes:

The softest of stuff in the world  
 Penetrates quickly the hardest;  
 Insubstantial, it enters  
 Where no room is.

By this I know the benefit

Of something done by quiet being

In all the world but few can know

Accomplishment apart from work

Instruction when no words are used. (p. 96)

Emphasizing the importance of individuals to be humble, the *Tae Te Ching* also states:

He does not show himself; therefore he is seen everywhere

He does not define himself, therefore he is distinct

He does not boast of what he will do, therefore he succeeds

He is not proud of his work, and therefore it endures. (as cited in Hopfe, 1991, p. 216)

In addition, Taoism stresses the interconnectedness of all material and non-material objects as well as the unity of opposites (*yin yang* in Chinese, *um yang* in Korean). Instead of being an entity separate from nature, the Taoist sees him or herself as one part of and in terms of the whole, as having a distinct tie to other people and forces of the universe. This leads one to recognize the complementary nature of opposites. Spariosu (2004) describes this as “a ceaseless play of polarities” which are considered “metaphorical and paradoxical ways in which one can describe fluid relationships among elements with ever-changing identities” (p. 117-118). The *Tae Te Ching* introduces this concept in the following manner:

Thus something and nothing produce each other;

The difficult and the easy complement each other;

The long and the short offset each other;

The high and the low incline toward each other;

Note and sound harmonize each other;

Before and after follow each other. (as cited in Spariosu, 2004, p. 118)

Clearly embodied in the teaching of Taoism is the concept of the dynamic, circular nature of the world and the idea that nature possesses something greater than logic. Also evident in Lao Tzu's teaching is a strong sense of relativism. Beauty, taste, and truth fit no absolute standards. In the end, all things should be allowed to run their course "within the all-embracing universe" (Ozman & Craver, 2003, p. 105) and should not be labeled as "right" or "wrong."

**Buddhism.** Compared with Taoism, the impact of Buddhism on Korean society has been much more outwardly visible and tangible. According to two earliest Korean historical records, *Samguk-saki* and *Samguk-yusa*, Buddhism was brought to the peninsula in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. during the Three Kingdoms Period (J.K. Lee, 2002). King Chimnyu officially adopted the religion in 384 B.C., and with the endorsement of and promotion by subsequent rulers, Buddhism eventually permeated all levels of society. J. K. Lee (2002) writes:

Having been transmitted from China, Buddhism came to be strongly supported by the royal families because Buddhist teaching and dogma were considered suitable doctrines which recognized the privileged sociopolitical position of the royal lines as well as a spiritual institution guiding socio-ethical principles for the Korean people. (p. 69)

In the Silla Dynasty (57 B.C. – 935 A.D.), Korean monks and students traveled to the Tang Dynasty in China and even to India to learn the tenets of the religion. Five major doctrinal sects were established, and the number of converts and temples increased rapidly (K. B. Lee, 1984). The first king of the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392 A.D.), Wang Kon, continued this trend by building many more temples and establishing an examination for Buddhist clergy. "With regard to modern higher education, Buddhist institutions in the early period were closely related to

monasteries to foster elite monks” (J. K. Lee, 2002, p. 71). Monks began to play a greater role in influencing the policy of the royal families; some became extremely politically powerful and amassed great estates. In addition, “Koryo Buddhism achieved a systematization with the woodblock printing of the Tripitaka, the Buddhist canon, as rendered in Chinese translations” (K. B. Lee, 1984, p. 130). Partly in response to the growing power and influence of Buddhist monks, many of whom had become corrupt, a suppression of Buddhism took place in the last dynasty, however, and Confucianism became the official state doctrine. In the Chosun Dynasty, “Buddhism could not but wither in a society where Confucianism was paramount. Taejo (the founder and first king of the Chosun Dynasty) himself instituted a registration system to prevent the monk population from increasing, and he banned any new founding of temples” (K.B. Lee, 1984, p. 199). Although Buddhism experienced slight resurgences during the reigns of Sejong and Sejo, the religion played a much less influential role during the 518 years of the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910). Many monks and followers were banished to the countryside, persecuted, and even killed under the auspices of Chosun kings. It wasn’t until the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) that Buddhism was revived because of Japanese interest in the faith, and its resurgence continued following the end of that occupation. “After liberation of the country, Buddhism was actively disseminated among the Korean people, and Buddhist sects rapidly spread” (J. K. Lee, 2002, p. 50).

Although generally associated with China, Buddhism originated in India. The religion was founded by Siddhartha Gotama (56 to 483 B.C.), a contemporary of Lao Tzu, who was born within present day Nepal. The Buddha (or “Enlightened One”) believed that in order for humans to achieve a state of *nirvana* (complete happiness and peace), they needed to free themselves from desire (*tanha*). In his first sermon, “Sermon on the Turning of the Wheel of the Law,”

Buddha introduced the Four Noble Truths: 1) Life is suffering, 2) The cause of this suffering is desire, 3) Suffering can be eliminated when desire is extinguished, and 4) Desire can be eliminated through the Eightfold Path, which consists of right understanding, right speech, right conduct, right vocation, right vocation, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration, and right thought (Ozman & Craver, 2003). In the course of his life the Buddha stressed to his disciples that they should speak clearly and make points gradually, observe a proper sequence of ideas, use words of compassion, refrain from irrelevant matters, and not make negative remarks about others. With his pupils, the Buddha is known to have begun discussions by “posing appropriate questions” and making use of similes, parables, fables, and verses (Ozman & Craver, 2003). “In addition to meticulous attention to his own style of teaching, the Buddha gave studious attention to the contact and training of his disciples, correcting their weaknesses through patience and advice,” write Ozman and Craver (2003, p. 99).

According to the Buddha, what is called the soul is actually a combination of the physical body, feelings, understanding, will, and consciousness. The so-called *anatman* (non-soulfulness), which makes up the human personality, “is bound up in the endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth” (Hopfe, 1991, p. 157). The Buddha also viewed the universe as *samsara*, “a stream without end by which the law of *karma* operates” (Ozman & Craver, 2003, p. 99) and spoke of the reciprocal nature of universal elements and of the dynamic interdependence of phenomena. Macy (as cited in Spariosu, 2004) described this notion as one of “mutual causality,” which is in contrast to earlier Vedic doctrines that were more linear and unidirectional. In other words, Spariosu (2004) interprets:

The Buddha is not interested in finding out what ‘causes’ produce a given factor A (such as suffering, ignorance or craving). Rather, he seeks to determine what else happens in

relation to the happening of A. In this sense, the occurrence of A, say, craving, provides a locus or context in which B, ignorance, can equally occur. Or, put in another way, B arises codependently with A. (p. 114-115)

Macy (as cited in Spariousu, 2004) further elaborates that early Buddhism was less analytical and more synthetic. Awareness involved taking a more holistic view in which all factors are considered in relation to each other.

In an effort to evoke the intuitive nature of learning and enlightenment, some sects of Buddhism which developed later, especially those influenced by Bodhidharma (c. 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Century), made use of perplexing or seemingly nonsensical questions or riddles called *koans*. Used to “shock the mind into awareness,” a *koan* “makes no sense, but it is designed to induce the initiative to go beyond sense or reason and to ponder” (Hopfe, 1991, p. 168). Well-known examples of *koans* are: “You have heard the sound of the clapping of two hands, but what is the sound of one hand clapping?” and “What was your face before your parents were born?” (Hopfe, 1991, p. 168). The act of contemplating the answer to these questions is hoped to induce a meditative state that frees the mind from a reliance on the logical and inductive.

**Confucianism.** Although the effect that Taoist and Buddhist thought have had on shaping Korean society and education in particular is substantial, the most recent of the three major Chinese belief systems to come to Korea, Confucianism, has had an even greater influence (Cumings, 2005; J. K. Lee, 2002; K. B. Lee, 1984; Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1983). In the words of Cumings (2005):

Old Korea was a universe all of its own, a fully realized human history like no other. It was a world defined by virtue, and if the virtues may be in retreat in contemporary Korea, as they are everywhere else, they still animate Korean minds: minds that are “front-end

loaded” whether they know it or not, with thousands of years of history, and deeply felt morality. Today we connote those virtues with the catchall term ‘Confucianism.’ This is often said to be a conservative philosophy, stressing tradition, veneration of a past golden age, careful attention to the performance of ritual, disdain for material things, commerce, and the remaking of nature, obedience to superiors, and a preference for relatively frozen social hierarchies. If Confucianism had those tendencies, it also had others – a salutary loyalty to one’s family, for example, which might translate into competition with other families over material wealth; an emphasis on moral remonstrance, for another, which gives to students and scholars an ethical stance from which to speak truth to power. (p. 20-21)

Confirming the importance of Confucianism, particularly on the Korean educational system, is J. K. Lee (2002), who writes, “Confucianism has been the main foundation of traditional thought that deeply spread its roots in Korean society. Throughout Korean history, the Korean people respected Confucian learning and attached great significance to education. This tradition continues to the present time” (p. 91). Since the establishment of the first Confucian institute, Taehak, in 372 A.D. by King Sosurim of Koguryo, evidence of this influence on the development of schools and means of teaching and learning throughout the history of the Korean educational system is bountiful.

Of the imperial dynasties, Chosun (1392 A.D.-1910 A.D.) provided Confucianism with most prominence, but several kings in both previous dynasties also established educational institutions and mechanisms for advancement that were guided by Confucian beliefs and standards. In the Silla Dynasty (57 B.C.–935 A.D.), the Kukhak (National Academy), whose curriculum emphasized Confucian learning and Chinese classics, was founded by King Sinmoon

in 682. During this period the Hwarang-do, an “educational system aimed to produce a leadership elite equipped with knowledge and martial skills” (S. O. Kim, 1983, p. 65-66) was also created. Education in the Hwarang-do centered around five Confucian principles: loyalty, filial piety, trust-worthiness, valor, and justice. In addition, reports S. O. Kim (1983), “The educational contents during the Koryo Dynasty were strongly influenced by Confucianism” (p. 67). Elite Confucian schools were set up during the reigns of Wang Kon (the founder of the Koryo Dynasty), King Injong, and Wonjong, and a state exam system modeled on the Chinese system was initiated in 958.

The most lasting legacies of Confucianism as related to formalized education in the imperial era came from the Chosun Dynasty, particularly in the form of the Seongkyunkwan (National Confucius Academy), which was built in 7<sup>th</sup> year of reign of Taejo, and the Kwa-keo (Civil and Military Exams) (K. B. Lee, 1984; J. K. Lee, 2002; Moon, 1991; Seth, 2005; Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1983). According to Thomas and Postlethwaite (1983), “The Confucian focus of both schools and the examination system played a crucial role in the fate of Korea, particularly during the latter phases of the 500-year Yi (Chosun) dynasty” (p. 191). The curriculum of the Seongkyunkwan, as well as Sodang, private institutes aimed at preparation for higher learning, consisted of Confucian classics, Chinese and Korean classical literature, and calligraphy. “Recitation of the classics was the principal method of teaching” (S. O. Kim, 1983, p. 69). Due to the fact that Confucianism had been “elevated to the status of a state cult” by that time (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006, p. 3), the importance of this schooling in Chosun society cannot be overemphasized. Seth (2005) explains, “An individual could become virtuous through the study of ethically oriented Confucian classics. He could then play a role as a moral exemplar and as a teacher and advisor to others, thus enhancing his status and influence in society” (p. 5).

The state-run Kwa-keo were no less important to those who sought to improve their social status. “For the *yangban* (gentry class),” states K. B. Lee (1984), “the examinations were the gateway to success” (p. 174). Seo and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) add, “Because this examination required comprehensive as well as in-depth knowledge bases, only people who were erudite in their studies could pass the exam” (p. 167). This helped with the creation of a culture in which formalized education and success on comprehensive standardized examinations were of utmost importance, a tradition that has survived to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The examination system and the schools associated with it primarily served as a means of allocating power, privilege, and status among members of the *yangban* aristocracy. In later South Korean society the *yangban* ideal of a refined, elite individual or family whose virtue, moral excellence, and right to privilege was periodically reaffirmed through educational achievement would remain a model for aspiring middle and even lower class Koreans. (Seth, 2005, p. 5)

Among the trio of sages that founded the three major religions/philosophies that came to Korea through China, Confucius (Kongzi in Chinese) was perhaps the most explicitly specific in terms of providing advice on teaching and learning. In the *Analects*, Kongzi (551 – 479 B.C.) stressed the need for teachers to help students develop moral character or order, called *li*, which he stated is more important than teaching skills or imparting knowledge. In Korean, this concept is similarly expressed in the ideal of *hongik ingam* (Shin & Koh, 2005). Kongzi also outlined what he called the eight steps of “great learning,” including investigation, extension of knowledge, authentication of will, rectification of the mind, governance of the state, and peacemaking under heaven (Greer and Ng, 2000). By following these steps, teachers can achieve a state of *jin* (“love” or “goodness”) (Hopfe, 1991).

Although Kongzi is known for instructing through means of examples, questions, and discussion, he supported an acquisition-focused approach to learning (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). Perhaps this stemmed from his belief that truth is not found in the self but in the collective, which implies that the most important truths already exist. Students were encouraged to learn the essentials but not necessarily create new ideas. “I transmit,” Kongzi said, “but I don’t innovate; I am truthful in what I say and devoted to antiquity” (as cited in Tweed & Lehman, 2002, p. 7). Respect for authority was emphasized, but Kongzi warned students not to “parrot the words” of the authorities; instead, they were urged to think deeply and “be reformed by the knowledge contained in those words” (Tweed & Lehman, 2002, p. 7).

Also significant to the process of learning was Kongzi’s contention that learning should be tied to hard work. In the *Analects* (18:1), he spoke of effort being of much greater importance than ability and stated that he expected nothing less than a student’s best effort (7:25, 14:7, 15:6). “Learning something and practicing it often – is this not a delight?” he wrote (*Analects*, 1:1, as cited in Greer & Ng, 2000, p. 2). Students were taught according to their talents and needs, and no one was to be denied the right to learn (Greer & Ng, 2000). Moreover, the idea of learning for the sake of learning itself was not familiar to Kongzi. He held a very pragmatic orientation to learning; the goals of education were self-improvement and the reformation of society (Ozman & Craver, 2003).

### **Traditional Learning Styles and Beliefs in Korea**

As mentioned previously, historical influences on the Korean educational system are not limited to those which originated in China. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of this subject would entail a look at other historical factors which shaped schools and learning in the Republic of Korea. In addition, it is important to note that, although traditional thought systems

and beliefs such as Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism have helped mold higher education in the country, modernization and globalization in the more recent centuries have also had a huge impact on how Koreans study and learn. In other words, education in the *Yangban* society of the Chosun Dynasty is vastly different than education in 21<sup>st</sup> Century South Korea. For instance, writes J. K. Lee (2002):

The traditional social values based on Confucianism are gradually decreasing. For example, first, materialistic abundance is highly valued instead of individual virtue or social morality; second, individualism is emphasized instead of collectivism; and third, money is more important than fame. (p. 162)

That being said, there is evidence suggesting that several traditional Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian beliefs and principles are reflected in the educational practices of Korean university students today. Examples of these inter-related influences include the Taoist and Buddhist idea of *wu-wei* and intuitive learning, *yin-yang*, and the notion of collectivism. Traditions and concepts stemming from Confucianism that can be seen in present day Korean classrooms include the idea of *li*, the respective roles of teachers and students, a reliance on memorization and an acquisition-based approach to learning, and an emphasis on various forms of standardized assessment.

**Wu-wei and intuitive learning.** When Lao Tzu (490 B.C./1955) writes, “It is the wise man’s way to know himself, and never to reveal his inward thoughts,” (p. 125), he is not only extolling individuals to refrain from meaningless verbal utterances but also promoting self-reflection and the idea of *wu-wei* or non-action. Implicit in the teachings of Lao Tzu, Buddha, and Confucius is also a reliance on the intuitive and the notion of *non-conceptual awareness* (Johnson, 2002), which encourages the individual to *be still* and observant of all in his/her

surroundings. “In Buddhist logic,” says Yum (1988), “two sources of knowledge are recognized: 1) sensation or perception, and 2) inference” (p. 381). Whereas Western education, as influenced by Aristotle, stresses the importance of logic, an open debate of ideas, and an application of the scientific method to the learning process, Eastern philosophy, often through the practice of meditation, encourages the development of the senses and understanding through feelings, non-deductive comprehension, and nonverbal communication. J. K. Lee (2002) states:

Generally, Western thought stresses logic and materialism, whereas Eastern thought tends to emphasize intuition rather than sense; the inner rather than the outer world; and mysticism rather than scientific discoveries....Western people who have been accustomed to Aristotelian thought would benefit from learning Eastern intuition and spiritualism. What would be advantageous for the West to incorporate are: spiritual quality, inner peace, attitudinal development, and mysticism. (p. 6)

Several recent studies and commentaries have reported that Korean students still take the advice stemming from the notions of *wu-wei* and intuitive learning to heart, particularly when it comes to oral participation in the classroom (Huh, 2004; Jin, 1993; M. S. Kim, 2002; S. O. Kim, 1983; Y. C. Kim, 2005; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Liu, 1996; Moon, 1991; Ok, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yang, 2004). Although it is difficult to say with certainty that this phenomenon is a manifestation of the practice of *wu-wei*, a form of face-saving (*chae-myun* in Korean), a desire not to stand out from the crowd, an attempt to show respect for the teacher and other students, or a combination of all of the above, lack of oral participation in the classroom is a reported tendency of Korean students. “Traditionally, Confucian education was intended for the seeking of truth and cultivating the mind of the common people, not for

communicating with each other,” writes Yang (2004, p. 43). A well-known Confucian scholar, Yi Yolgok (1536-1584) echoes this sentiment when he wrote about the way of a scholar:

He must refrain from careless speech. Man’s faults are often made from speaking. One must, therefore, speak politely, faithfully, and at the proper time. When giving assent, one must do it after discreet thinking. One must maintain dignity and order in one’s voice and must not indulge in making jokes or meaningless noises. (as cited in Yang, 2004, p. 44)

Perhaps because of the influence of this philosophy, S. O. Kim (1983) reports, “The Korean child is taught not to express his feelings and thought in a demonstrative way” (p. 106). It is a common perception in Korea that a talkative person is “weightless” and that “a quiet student learns more and is more respectful than one who speaks up,” adds S. J. Kim (2004, p. 5).

Another concept that affects Korean communication styles and encourages an observant and intuitive rather than outspoken approach is *nun-chi*. Yum (1988) explains:

Koreans place high value on catching minute nonverbal cues, on reading between the lines, and on hearing between the sounds. Perhaps because information is not forthcoming by verbal means Korean communication must place a great emphasis on nonverbal information. The more subtle the nonverbal communication, the more sensitive or masterful one should become to be a good communicator. . . *Nun-chi* (roughly translated as perceptiveness or sensitivity with eyes) is regarded as an important communicative quality in Korean culture, since it is through *nun-chi* that one understands what is going on without being told. (p. 80)

According to S. O. Kim (1983), *nun-chi* is a by-product of a traditional highly rigid and stratified social order in which the common folk were forced to survive in an environment where

there were “no objective rules, logic or reason to assist them in dealing with the irrational elements of class society” (p. 116) and remains an extremely important element in Korean culture today.

Studies of Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education that point to the tendency of these students to refrain from verbal communication in the classroom include those conducted by Y. C. Kim (2005), Lee & Carrasquillo (2006), Liu (1996), Moon (1991), Seo and Koro-Ljungberg, (2005), Tucker (2003), and Yang (2004). In a survey of professors at a U.S. university, Lee and Carrasquillo (2006) reported that 90% of those interviewed expressed the opinion that the Korean students in their classes did “not actively participate in classroom discussions” and attributed this fact in part to traditional educational and cultural values and practices (p. 7). Korean students surveyed in Moon’s (1991) study reported that “expressing opinions in class” was the third most difficult cultural adjustment for them (p. 80).

While the influence of traditional notions of *wu-wei*, *nun-chi*, and other cultural values may play a part in impacting the degree of oral participation of Korean students in the classroom, it must be noted that for members of this population who are enrolled at U.S. universities, having to use English as a second language in the classroom must also be taken into consideration. E. L. Lee (2007) points to this fact in a study of the oral participation of East Asian students, including Koreans, at U.S. institutions of higher learning. The author concluded that self-perceived English language ability, English speaking anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation may have more influence on the degree of oral participation in class of these students than do cultural factors. Difficulties with the usage of English grammar in speaking and writing and a tendency to speak Korean with other Korean students were also reported by Lee and Carrasquillo (2006) as other linguistic issues that affected classroom participation.

**Yin-yang.** Another traditional concept that permeates Korean society and culture is *yin-yang* (*um-yang* in Korean). Crane (1978) explains this philosophy and an example of its presence in Korea when he writes:

Life is controlled by two great contrasting forces: the Positive and the Negative, Light and Dark, Male and Female, Good and Evil. These forces, if in proper relationship, fit together to form the perfect circle or whole. This union in medicine is health. The concept is beautifully symbolized in the Korean flag with the center circle, or *T'aeguk*, which is made up of interlocking commas. The upper comma is the fiery red male *yang*. The lower comma is a receptive blue, or female *um*. (p. 103-104)

The adoption of this holistic, synthetic outlook by Koreans is evidenced in Jin's (1993) call for the construction of curriculum that is in harmony with Korean values and beliefs. Jin (1993) suggests that a curriculum which is in tune with the Korean culture must reflect and promote the fact that "Good and evil, beauty and ugliness, and dark and light are not two opposite substances to each other. In origin, they are one and the same" (p. 235). Jin (1993) gives the example of the Korean expression *gan i matda* as a way of illustrating how the *um-yang* concept is ingrained in the Korean way of thinking. "*Gan i matda* means the distance between some things is reasonable, that is some things are in harmony with themselves" (Jin, 1993, p.229). Education that does not reflect this principle is not in line with Korean culture, argues Jin.

The manifestation of the *um-yang* concept can be witnessed in the manner in which Koreans speak and write, according to several educators (Crowe & Peterson, 1995; S. O. Kim, 1983; Ok, 1991; Tucker, 2003). Viewing all elements of the universe as being inter-connected

and complementary encourages a tendency to see the whole before the specifics and to be less concerned with the individual elements than with *the big picture*. S. O. Kim (1983) writes:

Americans tend to move from the specific and small to the general and large. Americans progress from personal and local issues to those of the state and finally of the nation. But Koreans tend to move the other way around. It is more comfortable for Koreans to start with a general or larger part and then narrow to specific facts. (p. 118)

This manner of thinking can lead to patterns of communication that emphasize the general or abstract over the precise and detailed. In writing, for example, “The Korean essay will begin with a general statement related to the problem to be discussed,” states Tucker (2003). “This may be followed by tangential statements loosely related to the idea” (p. 4). This “surface to core” style, labeled *ki-sing-cen-kyel* in Korean, is “characterized by the fact that readers do not know what the essay is really about until they reach *cen* located halfway through the whole essay” (Ok, 1991, p. 92). This indirectness can be found in verbal communication as well, claim Yook and Albert (1993):

Asian cultures, such as the Korean culture, have been categorized as high context cultures in which meanings are derived indirectly from the context of the communication. The tentative style of communication, in which the emphasis is on indirect, evasive messages, is preferred by collectivists. (p. 19)

**Collectivism.** Related to this holistic manner of thinking and communicating is the notion of collectivism or group consciousness. Fostered by generations of Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian teachings that stress the importance of others (e.g., country, family, co-workers, classmates) over the self, Koreans, among other East Asians, show evidence of what Kitayama

and Markus (1991) call an *interdependent self construal* (Jin, 1993; S. J. Kim, 2004; S. O. Kim, 1983; Sosik & Jung, 2002; Youn, 2000).

In their research on culture and its implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation, Kitayama and Markus (1991) describe two construals of the self: one that derives from a belief in “the wholeness and uniqueness of each person’s configuration of internal attributes,” the “independent construal,” which the authors claim is more prevalent in the West (p. 4), and one that subscribes to the fundamental connectedness of human beings to each other and the environment, the “interdependent construal,” seen more often in the East (p. 5). This interdependent view of oneself and others, maintain Kitayama and Markus, results in “a relatively great cognitive elaboration of the other or of the self-in-relation-to-other” (p. 11). In addition, the specific social context in which one views oneself and others makes the acquisition of knowledge less abstract and generalized and more “specific to the focal context” (p. 11). Nonsocial cognitive activities such as categorizing and counterfactual thinking may also be shaped by this greater consideration of social context” (Kitayama & Markus, 1991, p. 11). Chiu (as cited in Kitayama & Markus, 1991, p. 17) has labeled this cognitive approach *relational-contextual thinking*, and Bruner (1986) describes this as a “narrative mode of thought” in which the emphasis is on “an interdependence among elements” (p. 18).

The impact of an interdependent self construal and a focus on the collective can be found in modern Korean schools and educational practices (Jin, 1993; S. J. Kim, 2004; S. O. Kim, 1983; Sosik & Jung, 2002; Youn, 2000). S. J. Kim (2004) maintains, “Korea’s strong collectivism-oriented culture has a profound influence on the school system” (p. 23). “Groups are the primary social unit throughout Korea,” states S. O. Kim (1983); thus, “The Korean subjectively experiences working together on common objectives as satisfying to their own inner sense of

purpose” (p. 109). The notion of shared ownership of knowledge (S. J. Kim, 2004; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Tucker, 2003), the practice of compromise and an adherence to group consensus and harmony in the classroom (Jin, 1993; S. J. Kim, 2004; Sosik & Jung, 2002), and an awareness of hierarchical roles in the classroom (S. J. Kim, 2004; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005) are some of the ways in which this group-oriented outlook manifests itself in the Korean educational environment.

The belief that knowledge does not belong to individuals but to the group, one possible outgrowth of the collectivist mindset, is one that has come to light with some Korean students on U.S. university campuses. Lee and Carrasquillo (2006) explain, “Korean culture considers published material to be in the public domain and people all share the knowledge without crediting a source. In Asian cultures, knowledge is not ascribed to the individual who thought or wrote it first” (p. 7). A survey by Lee and Carrasquillo found that the majority of U.S. professors interviewed believed, “Korean students do not properly give credit to the author of the work they include in their writing.” Korean students, on the other hand, stated that they “were unaware of the issue of ownership of knowledge or plagiarism” (p. 7). Tucker (2003) also raises this issue when he writes:

The concept of keeping an idea to yourself without contributing to the value of the group as a whole is foreign to the Korean worldview. In fact, it would be considered unscholarly to be boastful and say *this is my own idea, you cannot claim it.* (p. 5)

This omission to cite sources in academic papers can lead to charges of plagiarism by U.S. instructors.

Jin (1993) points to another tendency of Korean students that might have roots in traditional concepts of collectivism. When confronted with a classroom discussion aimed at

problem solving, Jin states, Korean students are more likely to reach agreement through the art of compromise or concession than by means of persuasive reasoning. This characteristic, which implies a consideration of the feelings and thoughts of others, “. . . can be traced to the traditional culture of an agriculture-centered society in which people belonged to the community in a tight social bond” (p. 201) and is indicative of the Confucian ideal of harmony or *the middle way* (*chung do* in Korean). Yook and Albert (1998) support this contention when they state, “Preserving in-group harmony and relationships is an important goal of communication in collectivistic cultures” (p. 19). Further verification of this tendency can be found in Sosik and Jung’s (2002) study of the effects of culture on group characteristics of both U.S. and Korean students, which concluded that groups composed of Koreans placed more emphasis on process, team building, and interpersonal relations among group members than on outcome or performance.

A final indication of the influence of an interdependent self construal and group mentality is related to the awareness of one’s place and role in a particular social setting. Seo and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) write, “In Asian culture, hierarchical systems (e.g., father and son, king and retainer, and teacher and student) are embedded in every aspect of society” (p. 5). In fact, Huh (2004), contends, “The issue of hierarchy might be one of the most crucial aspects in a Korean classroom” (p. 36). For Korean university students, this recognition can affect the degree to which they actively participate and the manner that they communicate and negotiate in a class setting (Yook & Albert, 1998), increase their concern for other-face maintenance (Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2004) and shape the way in which they deal with the teacher, who is in a position of authority, as well as their classmates.

**The concept of *li*.** Of utmost importance in Confucian thought is the notion that education should be aimed at promoting the social and moral order of humankind. This principle is conveyed in the concept of *li*. For Confucius, “a harmonious society and ideal state can be established through cultivating oneself” (J. K. Lee, 2002, p. 14). To this end, the individual is urged to put forth one’s best effort and to strive for accuracy, sincerity, and virtue not only to benefit oneself but to contribute to the building of a just society. In Korean, the idea of *li* can be found in the term *hongik ingan*.

*Hongik ingan* means the extension of human welfare, which contributes to the overall benefits of every human being’s life; to assist all people in developing individual moral character, to develop the ability to achieve an independent life, to acquire the qualification of citizens of a democracy, and to be able to play a positive role in democratic society. (Shin & Koh, 2005, p. 3)

Traditionally, the Korean educational system was established in a manner that promoted this principle (Huh, 2004; Jin, 1993; J. K. Lee, 2002; Yang, 2004). When speaking of Confucian education in the Chosun Dynasty, Yang (2004) writes, “...they believed that a person could preserve the innate virtues and control the innate emotions. This done, an individual was on his way to becoming benevolent and fully human and society was on its way to becoming harmonious” (p. 43-44). The idea of *scholar (sunbi)* was more than a person who excelled academically; it implied an adherence to morally just guidelines and principles (*myung bun*) and a commitment to hard work and endurance (Jin, 1993).

There is evidence that the influence of *hongik ingan* still plays a role in shaping current educational practices in the peninsula. Although formalized education in Korea has been and still is greatly tied to individual social advancement (J. K. Lee, 2002; Seth, 2005; Shin & Koh,

2005), practices related to this traditional concept of scholarship, including an emphasis on effort, accuracy, concentration, and the delay of academic gratification continue to exist (Baker, 1996; Bembenutty, 2007; Diem, Levy & VanSickle, 1997; Y. H. Kim, 1999; Shin & Koh, 2004; Youn, 2000). Among the cultural characteristics of Korean students identified in a study of the epistemological beliefs about learning between U.S. and Koreans by Youn (2000) were an emphasis on accuracy and punctuality. In an examination of 135 undergraduate Korean college students, Bembenutty (2007) reported that academic delay of gratification, which the author defined as the intention “to postpone immediate available rewards in order to obtain larger rewards temporally distant,” was associated with students’ use of “volitional strategies, expected grade, self-efficacy beliefs, and academic performance” (p. 3). These findings suggest an understanding of the need to forgo immediate rewards for future gain, a characteristic promoted by the *hongik ingan* mentality.

**Role of teacher and student.** A widely reported difficulty for Korean university students in the United States is adjusting to the manner in which students interact with their instructors in America (Huh, 2004; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yook & Albert, 1998; Youn, 2000). This factor is usually attributed to differing concepts of the role of the teacher in both societies as well as to traditionally accepted notions of the student-teacher relationship. The idea that the instructor should be seen as a great exemplar and figure of authority has deep roots in Confucian culture and thus has shaped the relationship between teachers and students in Korea for centuries. In Korea, Huh (2004) explains:

The teacher occupies a status as someone who can be followed, leading to true understanding of knowledge and virtue. A teacher is also recognized as the light of the

heart, and therefore has extended responsibility not only as someone who delivers knowledge but also as one who guides students' lives through virtuous examples of life and knowledge. Therefore, the teacher is seen as a figure of authority and respect. (p. 44-45)

In fact, report Shin and Koh (2005), the teacher in traditional Korean society was given so much reverence that they were considered on the same level as a ruler or king. Youn (2000) characterizes the interaction style between teacher and student in Korea as being teacher-centered, in which "it is the teacher and not the student who initiates and controls students' learning experiences" (p. 90). This tradition has encouraged students to address their teachers with formality, to refrain from asking questions or speaking in the classroom, to avoid eye contact with their instructors, and to shy away from any form of communication that could be seen as a challenge to the teacher's authority.

Each of the above tendencies related to teacher-student relations in Korea have been reported in studies of Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yook & Albert, 1998). Ninety percent of the U.S. professors surveyed in Lee and Carrasquillo's (2006) study described most Korean students as being "passive" in class and remarked that many of these students did not make eye contact with them during class discussions or conversations, two characteristics the author's attributed to cultural concepts of the teacher-student relationship. Seo and Ljungberg (2005) reported that many Korean students felt "uncomfortable when American students call their professor by his or her first name" (p. 169). In a study of the perceptions of Korean and American university students regarding the appropriateness of negotiation in educational settings, Yook and Albert (1998) found that the Korean students found

negotiation with instructors significantly less appropriate than their U.S. counterparts in 12 of 13 situations. The authors concluded that when dealing with feelings of discontent about a particular class, “Korean students view speaking to the instructor in this situation as significantly less appropriate than do mainstream American students” (p. 28). Additionally, Tucker (2003) maintains that Korean beliefs about the respective roles of teachers and students even has implications when it comes to the practice of using citations in research papers:

The cultural value of deference and courtesy preclude the Korean student from directly citing the source of his or her information. It would be an affront to the professor to put something in quotation marks and thus embarrass the intelligence of the expert (the teacher). The Korean would be thinking, ‘the professor will naturally know where this information comes from.’ And, even if the teacher does not know, you must not embarrass him by pointing this out. (p. 5-6)

**The role of memorization.** In describing a characteristic of modern day Korean education, Y. H. Kim (1999) from the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) writes:

In the classroom, rote-learning and memorization are prevalent. Teachers focus on drills and on the subjects which are included in the college entrance examination. Students are required to memorize what is handed out and cram fragmentary knowledge into their heads. (p. 58)

The phenomenon Y. H. Kim (1999) depicts is one often mentioned when speaking of learning styles and strategies in not just Korea but throughout East Asia (Au & Entwistle, 1999; Baker, 1996; Entwistle & Entwistle, 2003; J. K. Lee, 2002; Leung, 2002; Sachs & Chan, 2003; Shin & Koh, 2005) and is one that has strong ties to cultural traditions. The acquisition-based approach to learning is particularly advocated in Confucianism; Confucius promoted the

committing to heart of *the essentials* and felt the role of the instructor was to transmit knowledge rather than create ideas (Greer & Ng, 2000; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). In Korea, this philosophy led to the development of an educational system in which rote learning plays a prominent role (Crane, 1978; Cumings, 2005; Y. H. Kim, 1999; J. K. Lee, 2002; Shin & Koh, 2005). Crane (1978) reports:

Memory work is one of the main emphases in many Korean schools, and children are drilled excessively in such work. Because of this, Korean children are unusually good at memorization and often surpass Western children of the same age in this ability. (p. 47)

Western educators often equate rote memorization with *surface learning* and disparage students from relying on this approach (Au & Entwistle, 1999; Entwistle & Entwistle, 2003; Kember, 2000; Meyer, 2002; Sachs & Chan, 2003; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). However, recent research has indicated that there may be a tie between the process of memorizing facts and forms of deeper understanding (Au & Entwistle, 1999; Entwistle & Entwistle, 2003; Sachs & Chan, 2003; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). These findings provide further evidence of a possible link between traditional Asian values and current educational practices.

In looking at groups of Chinese students and their use of memorization strategies, Marton, Dall'Alba, and Kun (as quoted in Tweed & Lehman, 2002) argued that “culturally Chinese students often use memorization not as an end in itself but as a path to understanding” (p. 95). Other scholars, including Kember (as cited in Tweed & Lehman, 2002) and Biggs (as cited in Tweed & Lehman, 2002), also contend that many culturally Chinese students combine techniques of memorization with techniques for comprehension and, even when relying solely on methods that involved the repetitive intake of information, often display *a deeper approach* to learning than culturally Western students. Sachs and Chan (2003), while finding no intrinsic link

between memory and understanding, suggest that *meaningful memorization* may play a role in enhancing the ability of students to fully comprehend subject matter. Tang (as cited in Entwistle & Entwistle, 2003) labels this *deep memorizing*. In addition, Au and Entwistle (1999), in their work with secondary students in Hong Kong, identified a form of *memorization with understanding* that they describe as being commonly practiced by these students, and Meyer (2002) supports the claim that a form of memorization leading to understanding, which is distinct from *rote learning*, exists. In their study of the interplay of memorization and understanding, Entwistle and Entwistle (2003) conclude that there is a difference between *memorization* and *committing to memory*. “*Committing to memory* is more like *meaningful reception learning* repeated several times, with understanding sequentially deepened and regularly checked. This process appears to be somewhat similar to the *deep memorizing* of Asian students” (p. 36).

In an interview conducted in 1996 (Tweed & Lehman, 2002), a majority of Chinese educators expressed the view that there is a clear relation between memorization and understanding and that rote learning can lead to a high level of comprehension. As one Chinese instructor put it, “In the process of repetition, it is not a simple repetition. Because each time I repeat, I would have some new idea of understanding, that is to say I can understand better” (Tweed & Lehman, 2002, p. 95).

The concept that repetition can lead to higher levels of cognitive awareness is supported by Confucius’ belief that hard work and the acquisition of knowledge can lead to a consciousness of the wisdom of the ages, but there is also the possibility that other forces embodied in East Asian culture are at work in this phenomena. Just as enlightenment comes to a Buddhist monk who repeats the same chant over and over, perhaps the student who focuses his or her efforts on reading, writing, or listening to the same words until they are committed to

memory makes use of some mental capacity that evokes deeper understanding. Spariosu (2004) writes about how meditation and the use of *koans*, techniques commonly used especially by Taoists and Buddhists, helps the learner “step back” from concepts in order to better understand them:

Conceptualization tends to operate with pre-established cognitive frameworks so that, through meditation, the practitioner learns how to detach himself from such frameworks, avoiding the perpetuation of their validity. In turn, early Taoism prefers the practice of ‘de-constructing’ pre-established concepts through logical paradox in order to reorganize experience in consonance with the Tao – a technique that is also available in early Buddhism. (p. 126)

Spariosu (2004) labels this process *objectless knowing* or *second-order thinking*; Macy (as cited in Spariosu, 2004) calls this state *non-discriminatory awareness*. In order to make the case that East Asian students, including those from Korea, are engaging in a type of meditation, thereby increasing their awareness of the *wholeness* of the material, when they practice the art of memorization and repetitive drilling, much more research would need to be conducted. Recent studies in this area do provide further indications of the connection between the current learning strategies of Korean students and traditional cultural practices and beliefs.

**Standardized assessment.** Beginning with the early days of Chinese influence in the Koguryo and Silla dynasties and continuing through the Koryo and Chosun dynasties, standardized testing has played a prominent historic role in Korean society (Crane, 1978; Huh, 2004; Y. H. Kim, 1999; J. K. Lee, 2002; K. B. Lee, 1984; Seth, 2005; Shin & Koh, 2005; Thomas & Postlethwaite, 1983). An example of this importance can be found in the *kwa-keo*

civil servant examination system during the Chosun Dynasty; success on these examinations was the key to social advancement and a means of gaining wealth and influence at the time.

In the present day Korean educational system, standardized forms of testing continue to be a heavily utilized means of assessment. The highly competitive nationwide college entrance examination in particular not only determines which students will be eligible to gain admission to the country's institutions of higher learning but also shapes curriculum and instruction throughout the educational system. "The Korean college entrance examination is so competitive," says Y. H. Kim (1999), "that most preceding school education, in particular, high school education has evolved into mere preparatory courses for the examination" (p. 58). This phenomena has led to the development of an examination *mania* or *hell* (Baker, 1996, Diem et al., 1997; Y. H. Kim, 1999; Seth, 2005; Shin & Koh, 2005) in which students are subjected to "endless exam preparations" (Baker, 1996, p. 2) that involve 12-15 hour study days in schools, *cram institutes*, and private tutoring sessions known as *kwaoe*. According to Y. H. Kim (1999), this has not only encouraged the practice of rote learning and reinforced the idea of the teacher as a *dispenser of knowledge* (Shin & Koh, 2005) but also had the following consequences for students:

Extra-curricular activities are neglected. Hours assigned to home room are often replaced by classes in core subjects. Students are provided with neither the opportunity to acquire reasoning, critical thinking ability and creativity, nor the opportunity to nurture responsible moral judgments, aesthetic sensitivity, and character-building. (p. 58)

Evidence that Y. H. Kim's (1999) assertion might be correct is found in several studies of Korean students at U.S. universities (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006, Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yang, 2004). For example, Lee and Carrasquillo (2006) report

that 91% of U.S. professors and 64% of Korean students in their survey believe that the students had difficulty with critical reasoning and were “more interested in the identification of specific facts” (p. 7). Tucker (2003) also states that Korean students in his classes “...would study for many hours, get up early, stay up late, and usually studied in groups. They would do well on objective tests, but do poorly on essay exams” (p. 4). Although these observations are worth noting, more research would need to be conducted in order to substantiate a direct tie between an emphasis on standardized assessment and the development of critical thinking skills.

### **Studies of Korean Students in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education**

The literature reviewed for this study that involved studies of students from the Republic of Korea enrolled at U.S. universities and colleges primarily focused on the perceptions of both Korean students and U.S. professors about the characteristics and preferences of Korean students related to classroom behavior and interaction, English language ability, negotiation and interaction with instructors, style of communication (both written and oral) and reasoning style, and the concept of ownership of knowledge (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yook & Albert, 1998). In addition, some studies examined problems and cross-cultural adaptation issues that members of this population faced and made conclusions about the tendency of Korean students to display various aspects of their native culture while in the U.S. (Moon, 1991, Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Yang, 2004; Yook & Albert, 1998). Finally, most of the studies offered suggestions for both instructors and students on improving the educational experiences of the students (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yang, 2004).

Among the observations made in these studies by both professors and students regarding the classroom behavior and interaction tendencies of Korean students were:

1. Lack of oral participation in class (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006, Tucker, 2003, Yook & Albert, 1998);
2. An avoidance of eye contact with others (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006);
3. A preference for lectures and large classes and a dislike of group work (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006);
4. A tendency to observe the nonverbal clues of others and follow strict rules of conduct (Tucker, 2003).

A number of perceptions noted in the literature were related to the usage of English as a Second Language by this population. Difficulties in English proficiency with the usage of English vocabulary and grammar (in particular, word order, subject/verb agreement, verb tense) in speaking and writing as well as a tendency to speak Korean with other Korean students were linguistic issues reported (Moon, 1991; Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). Yang (2004) also reported that “a lack of confidence resulting in making mistakes” contributed to the anxiety level of students (p. iv).

Regarding the relationship between students and professors, the literature suggests that Korean students typically tended to view their instructors as *absolute authorities* who are to be respected and shown deference (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yang, 2004; Yook & Albert, 1998). This often dissuaded students from asking questions in and out of the classroom as well as lead to an “uncritical acceptance of the teacher’s instructions” (Youn, 2000, p. 91). In addition, Yook and Albert (1998) reported that the Korean students enrolled in a U.S. university listed fewer situations in which negotiation with a professor was appropriate than did their U.S. counterparts and that these students stated the *reciprocal aspect of mutual concession* was an important part of the negotiation process.

Differences in reasoning styles between U.S. and Korean students were also discussed in some of the literature. Some of the observations made in this regard were that Korean students were more familiar with an indirect, circular reasoning and that they often had difficulty with pragmatic, critical, or direct reasoning (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Tucker, 2003). This tendency, stated Tucker (2003), is especially evident in the manner in which Korean students organize and write essays. Related to inclinations in the writing styles of students from Korea is the concept of public ownership of academic knowledge (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Tucker, 2003). This concept was stated as leading some Korean students to not cite their sources in both writing and public speaking.

Several studies have addressed problems and cross-cultural adaptation issues encountered by Korean students in institutions of higher learning in the U.S. (Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Yang, 2004; Yook & Albert, 1998). In Moon's (1991) survey of 2,414 Korean students in the U.S., the respondents reported experiencing the following problems: adjusting to differences in the value of education, adjusting to American customs, attitudes, and other behaviors, expressing opinions in class, adjusting to the U.S. environment, adjusting to campus social life, maintaining student/faculty relationships, and recognizing differences in the perception of the word "love" (Moon, 1991, p. 80). In addition, Yang's (2004) study of the role of anxiety in the self-concepts of South Korean students in the U.S. revealed that a lack of confidence resulting from making mistakes, understanding pragmatic approaches to learning, learning the rules of academic writing, building relationships with native speakers, and having to use English with other South Korean students were all factors that increased the anxiety level of those surveyed.

Both Seo and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) and Yook and Albert (1998) have dealt with the influence that the primary culture of Korean undergraduate and graduate students has on their experience in the United States. Seo and Koro-Ljungberg concluded that “Korean students often perceive and interpret their American peers’ thoughts and actions through the lens of Confucianism instead of considering the situated and local features of American culture” (p. 183). Moreover, the authors found that older students were more likely to follow traditional cultural patterns than were younger students. This held true even for those older students who’d given up careers in Korea to pursue their studies abroad, which for Seo and Koro-Ljungberg presented an interesting dichotomy:

With the hope of obtaining advanced degrees in the United States, which would in turn promise a brighter future back in Korea, these older Korean students left all their privileges as high achievers and overachievers in Korean society, although Korean culture and most of their families discouraged them from doing so. In this way, students made conscious decisions to depart from Korean cultural expectations, but they were not capable or willing to replace them with U.S. cultural values. (Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005, p. 183)

With regards to classroom negotiation, Yook and Albert also found that Korean students were significantly influenced by their primary culture but that undergraduates were more willing to break free from traditional patterns of thinking about negotiation.

The literature also offered a number of suggestions to both U.S. educators and Korean students on enhancing the educational experiences of the students. Recommendations for instructors and U.S. institutions included

1. Make use of teacher modeling in class (Tucker, 2003);
2. Provide visual as well as verbal reinforcement of teaching points (Tucker, 2003);
3. Use of a variety of assessment tools and interactive classroom activities (Tucker, 2003);
4. Learn as much as possible about the cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds of students (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006);
5. Provide in-service staff development for professors in the area of multicultural education (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006);
6. Provide cultural orientation to students about U.S. culture and education (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Tucker, 2003);
7. Provide opportunities for Korean and U.S. students to learn about each others' cultures and educational systems (Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Yang, 2004);
8. Encourage interaction between Korean and U.S. students in the classroom and allow Korean students opportunity to speak in class (Yang, 2004);
9. Make sure that class materials used and information presented that deal with Korea is up-to-date and accurate (Yang, 2004);
10. Have an awareness of the concerns and difficulties of this group of students (Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005).

In conclusion, students interviewed by Yang (2004) indicated that “Teachers were the most important figures influencing their self-confidence and language anxieties, because according to teachers, they felt they could make contribution to their classes, which influenced their positive self-concepts and lead to low anxiety” (p. 216).

The studies also provided a few suggestions to Koreans studying in the U.S. These included

1. Become as proficient as possible in English before arriving in U.S. (Moon, 1991);
2. Learn more about differences between Korean and U.S. educational systems prior to arrival in U.S. (Moon, 1991);
3. Approach everyday life in the U.S. and relationships with teachers and other students differently than when in Korea (Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005);
4. Develop effective strategies for dealing with anxiety and stress in the U.S. (Yang, 2004);
5. Do not hesitate to ask questions for clarification, confirmation or help (Yang, 2004);
6. Learn about social and cultural norms and values while in the U.S. (Yang, 2004);
7. Understand that making mistakes in English is unavoidable (Yang, 2004);
8. Don't hesitate to speak English in and outside of the classroom with both U.S. students and other Koreans (Yang, 2004);
9. Understand that having anxiety while living in another country is natural (Yang, 2004);
10. Be clear of one's goals for studying in the U.S. (Yang, 2004).

As final advice for Korean students, Yang (2004) discusses the tendency of some Koreans to “over-idealize U.S. life,” especially related to “U.S. education, style, and pop-culture under the current world economic structure and the close military bonds between the U.S. and South Korea” (p. 221). It is important, stresses the author, for Korean students to have a realistic idea of what life in the U.S. is like and, at the same time, have a clear idea of their own culture and history.

## Conclusion

While the above studies provide some insight into the experiences of Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education and offer a few suggestions on how both students and instructors can enhance learning, the studies are limited in scope and do not provide comprehensive in-depth looks at the multiple factors that promote the acculturation of these students. The studies point out various problems that Korean students have had and identify a number of cultural and educational differences that exist between Koreans and U.S. Americans, but they do not thoroughly examine the cultural and historical factors that impact the learning styles of Koreans nor apply concepts from border pedagogy to the process of acculturation of these individuals. Furthermore, although offering suggestions for both instructors and students on how to “improve” their cross-cultural learning experiences, the authors of the studies, by the nature of their suggestions, seem to assume that students need to assimilate to U.S. culture rather than use the cultural resources they possess to acculturate themselves. This suggests the need for research that takes a more detailed, exhaustive examination of the backgrounds and experiences of Korean students in U.S. universities, applies a more holistic, multivalent approach to the interpretation of the data, and offers suggestions that allow both students and instructors to *cross the border* from one-sided, positivist outlooks to global perspectives that lead to actualization and empowerment.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Methods**

#### **Introduction**

By interviewing a total of sixteen participants (six Korean students, six U.S. faculty, and four Korean faculty) at a public university in the U.S., this study focused on obtaining information related to the experience and perceptions of students who are enrolled at the university, U.S. faculty who have had Korean students in their classes, and faculty from Korea who are teaching at the university. In particular, the study attempted to pinpoint ways in which the participants can become aware of and resist tendencies and approaches existing within their U.S. classrooms that promote hegemony and devalue cultural perspectives and experiences, work with each other to construct meaning by using a synthesis of learning and teaching styles, and put learning into the context of their worldviews as influenced by both Korean and U.S. cultures. It is hoped that the identification of these skills and strategies will aid these individuals and others in developing what is needed to become successful “border crossers” as well as culturally enlightened citizens of the global community.

The study, which was qualitative in nature and adapted a symbolic interaction, ethnographic, and critical theory approach, was conducted over a period of seven months (from July, 2009 to February, 2010) and aimed at providing information that supports the process of acculturation of Korean students who are studying at U.S. institutions of higher education. For

the purposes of this study, it should be noted that all references to Korea in the report indicate The Republic of Korea or South Korea, as opposed to The Democratic People's Republic or North Korea.

### **Research Questions**

The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do both students and faculty view the Korean education system and teaching and learning strategies common in Korea as being influenced by culture?
2. How do both students and faculty view the U.S. education system and teaching and learning strategies common in the U.S. as being influenced by culture?
3. What are some cultural differences between Korea and the U.S. that have an impact on Korean students' performance and behavior in and attitudes about their classes in the U.S.? How do both students and faculty perceive these differences?
4. From the point of view of both students and faculty, does the approach the students take to learning or their classroom behavior change over the course of their studies in the U.S.? If so, how does it change? If not, why do they perceive this to be the case?
5. From the point of view of both students and faculty, is success in the classroom best secured by strategies associated with assimilation or acculturation?
6. What strategies are used? How are these helpful or not, and what alternatives would be preferred?
7. Do students feel their cross-cultural experience in the U.S. helps them better understand and deal with the current global environment? If so, how? Do faculty feel their experience working with Korean students helps both the students and faculty better understand and deal with the current global environment? If so, how?

## Design of the Study

The study consisted of semi-structured interviews with six Korean students (three undergraduate and three graduate) enrolled at a mid-sized institution of higher education in the American Midwest, six U.S. faculty from different academic units at the university who had had at least three Korean students in their classes within the past two years, and four faculty members originally from the Republic of Korea who were teaching at the university. It was hoped that a comparison of the responses of these three groups of individuals would shed light on the issues dealt with in this study.

Understanding several assumptions that underlie the design of this study is an essential part of interpreting the data that result from the research. First, the author's view of qualitative research matches Glesne's (2006) view that the qualitative approach assumes that "reality is socially constructed" and that "variables are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure" (p. 5). As opposed to quantitative research, which is primarily concerned with clear causal explanations and prediction, qualitative studies attempt to contextualize and interpret the data they collect; this leads to an approach which is naturalistic and inductive (Glesne, 2006). Due to the fact that the subject of this research in part seeks to find a relationship between Reconceptualist concepts that are found in border pedagogy and the impact that culture has on learning, a qualitative approach, which takes into consideration multiple interrelated and multifaceted factors is more appropriate. A quantitative study which hypothesized about the highly individualized, detail-rich experiences of the participants would fall short of revealing the *full story* that these individuals have to tell and be less meaningful to a holistic understanding of the subject.

In addition, the study took a symbolic interaction approach. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), this approach assumes that:

The meaning people give to their experience and their process of interpretation are essential and constitutive, not accidental or secondary to what the experience is. To understand behavior, we must understand definitions and the processes by which they are manufactured. (p. 27)

The notion, which runs congruent to ideas found in the writings of Constructivists such as Bruner (1966, 1986, 1996), Novak (1998), Piaget (1970), and Vygotsky (1934/1986), assumes that learning is an active process in which meanings are created and knowledge is negotiated through social interaction. Relating this concept to the idea of culture, Bruner (1996) writes, “Culture shapes mind, that is it provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conceptions of ourselves and our powers” (p. x). In addition, the symbolic interaction process involves the interpretation of meaning with the help of others. In other words, “interpretation is not an autonomous act” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 27); it is a process that is facilitated by the interviewer or researcher. This guided interpretation then becomes the conceptual model (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

This study is also ethnographic in nature. While the experiences, perceptions, and opinions of a group of individuals were highlighted, an attempt was also made to relate those individuals’ stories to others. “*Ethnographic* literally means to describe a people or cultural group” (Glesne, 2006, p. 9). This approach focuses on shared meanings, on interpretations that might have significance for those with similar backgrounds. Critical ethnography, in particular, which Glesne (2006) defines as “an attempt to do more than represent the experiences and perspectives of research participants” (p. 16), is relevant to the aims of this study. Just as border

pedagogy seeks to unmask injustices that oppress groups of people, the goal of critical ethnography is to “involve study participants as co-researchers of sorts who combine investigation, education, and action” (Glesne, 2006, p. 16). In the end, this study not only intends to enlighten and inform; it also hopes to empower and reform.

### **Methods, Procedures, and Instrumentation**

**Qualification of researchers.** The researchers of this study were both doctoral candidates and were bilingual in Korean and English. The principal researcher was a U.S. citizen whose native language was English and second language was Korean. This individual had been an employee at the university for approximately four years prior to the beginning of the study and had been working in the field of international education as both an instructor and administrator for over twenty-five years. During this time, the chief researcher worked with students from various countries, including Korea. In his position at the university, the researcher had regular contact with several Korean students at the university and served as an immigration advisor for a number of these students. The principal researcher also lived in Korea for approximately eight years, where he served as a Peace Corps volunteer, health care administrator, and English as a Foreign Language instructor. The principal investigator had taken Qualitative Methods Inquiry, Statistical Methods, and Statistical Inferences at the university. In his master’s degree program, he also took a research methods class entitled “Project Design and Proposal Writing” and conducted a quantitative research study for my Master’s Project entitled “A Survey of Eye Complications of Leprosy Patients in North Kyung Sang Province, Korea.”

The co-investigator was a Korean citizen whose native language was Korean and second language was English. At the time of the study, this individual had lived in the U.S. for about six years. Prior to beginning his Ph.D. program, he received his Masters in Teaching English as a

Second Language at the university and had taught English at the university level in Korea for three and a half years. The co-investigator was working on a doctoral dissertation proposal entitled “The Study of Relationships between the Big Five Personality Traits and Language Learning Strategies” at the time of the study. The co-investigator’s study was unrelated to the topic dealt with in the current study and used no students or faculty members at the university as participants. In his doctoral program, the co-investigator had taken Research in Linguistics, Statistical Methods, Statistical Inferences, and Quantitative Research. In 2002, he conducted a research project entitled “Non-linguistic Factors in Second or Foreign Language Learning” with students at the intensive English program associated with the university. He had also conducted several secondary research projects in Korea.

**Participants.** The study involved three groups of participants. The first group was comprised of fulltime students at the university. To be eligible for participation, these student participants must have been citizens of the Republic of Korea and in the U.S. on F-1 (student non-immigrant) visas. They also had to have been enrolled at the university for a minimum of one year (two academic semesters) and had a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale. These requirements helped ensure that the students chosen would have had some time to become somewhat familiar with the U.S. educational system and demonstrated relative success within this system.

The second group of participants consisted of fulltime tenured faculty members who had taught at the university for a minimum of six years. This requirement helped ensure that the faculty had more of a commitment to and familiarity with the university than part-time faculty who had not had as much experience at this particular institution. The fact that the faculty chosen was tenured was an indication of their success in their profession. In addition, the U.S.

faculty participants recruited had to have had at least three Korean students in one or more of their classes over the course of the previous two years. Finally, only U.S. citizens who had never been citizens of the Republic of Korea were chosen in this group; this requirement was instituted as an attempt to enable clearer comparisons to be made between the responses of these participants and those of the Korean faculty members.

The final group of interviewees consisted of assistant and/or associate faculty members teaching on a fulltime basis at the university who were at the time of the study or in the past citizens of the Republic of Korea and whose native language was Korean. It was hoped that the responses of this group of participants would add to the discussion because of their familiarity with Korean issues related to Korean education and culture and the fact that they would be sharing their perceptions based on their experiences as both teachers and students.

**Recruitment.** To recruit student participants, the principal researcher, in his position at the university, generated a report that identified all fulltime Koreans students on F-1 visas who had been enrolled at the university for at least one academic year. The principal investigator then provided the co-investigator a list these students along with their majors and school e-mail addresses. This list contained no confidential information, such as grade point average. The initial e-mail of contact was sent in Korean by the co-investigator and did not mention the principal investigator's involvement in the study. This precaution was taken in order to reduce the possibility that prospective student participants might make a decision to participate or not to participate based on the chief investigator's involvement in the study.

Based on the responses of potential student participants, the co-investigator chose six participants. An attempt was made to select a combination of male and female students from different academic departments at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The principal

investigator was not informed who these participants were nor which students, if any, declined to participate. In other words, the identities of all student participants and those who declined were unknown to the principal investigator. The co-investigator then met with each participant who agreed, explained the consent form in both Korean and English, obtained the participant's signature, and set up a time and location for the interviews. It is important to note that the consent form did reveal the identity of the principal investigator; even though the principal investigator was not aware of the identities of the student participants, they became aware of his involvement at that point. Prospective student participants were also asked to provide an unofficial copy of their transcripts to verify that they had a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher.

Faculty members from different departments on campus who were believed to meet the above criteria were contacted by the principal researcher to ascertain their interest in participation. These prospective participants were contacted by the principal investigator through his personal, not institutional, email account. U.S. faculty members who expressed an interest in participating in the study were sent a copy of the Faculty Consent Form and asked to confirm that they had taught a minimum of three Korean students in at least one of their classes in the previous two years. An attempt was made to select both U.S. and Korean faculty who represented different academic departments and had taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. When it was determined that the interested faculty were eligible to be participants, a time and location for the interview was established. The faculty member's signature was obtained on the consent form at the time of the interview.

**Location of study.** All interviews were conducted on the campus of an average-sized public, co-educational university in the American Midwest. The university was located in a

town of approximately 60,000 residents. According to the university's website, the university offered associate, bachelor's, master's, doctorate, and educational specialist degrees and over 100 majors. In the fall of 2009, the university had a total student enrollment of 10,534. 95.4% of those students were from the United States and 4.6% from outside the U.S. (with over 56 countries represented). In terms of the diversity of the student body in 2009, 75.3% of the students were Caucasian and 24.7% described as either minority, international students, or students of unknown origin. The number of tenured and tenure-track faculty at the university in 2008 was 436, and the average class size in 2006 (the most recent figures given) was 24.6. In 2007, the faculty-student ratio was 1:17.6.

Student interviews for this study were conducted by the co-investigator in either a quiet, secure room in university housing or in a study room of the university library where there was little or no chance of interruption. Faculty interviews were conducted by the principal investigator in either a quiet, secure department conference room, faculty office, or study room of the university library where there was little or no chance of interruption.

**Procedures.** Prior to the student interviews, both researchers met on several occasions to discuss the aims of the interviews and translate the student questions from English into Korean. A second Korean native speaker fluent in English was asked to review this translation to ensure its accuracy. All student interviews were conducted in the Korean language by the co-investigator (a native Korean speaker) so that the students would be able to express themselves in their native language. It was hoped that this would enable students to more accurately reveal their perceptions and opinions. Having these interviews conducted by the co-investigator instead of the principal researcher, who could potentially been seen as a figure of authority by the students, was also thought to reduce the likelihood that students would feel pressured to answer

in a particular manner. The principal researcher was not present during the time of the student interviews; all student interviews were conducted by the co-investigator alone. The interviews, which took from approximately 60 to 90 minutes each, were tape-recorded digitally by co-investigator. The co-investigator did not take notes during the interviews as it was felt that taking notes would distract the interviewees and make it more difficult for the researcher to ask appropriate follow-up questions. Participants were informed that all interviews would be recorded. The student participants were also informed that the principal researcher would be listening to the recordings but would not be aware of the identity of each participant.

Questions asked during the student interviews all directly pertained to the research questions. In general, student participants were asked to

1. describe some of the cultural, academic, and linguistic difficulties and successes they have encountered both in Korea and the U.S.;
2. share their perceptions about what some of the differences between the U.S.; and Korean educational systems are and what “being a successful student in both countries means;
3. assess their views on how culture and education are related and how both Korean and U.S. cultures have influenced or been influenced by their respective educational systems;
4. reflect on changes that might have occurred in their personal approaches to learning during their time in the U.S. and how they feel about those changes;
5. identify specific skills and strategies they used as students in Korea that they feel they are also able to use in the U.S. to help them be successful academically as well as those skills and strategies have not been helpful;

6. express their opinions about U.S. society, politics and culture in general and educational practices they've witnessed at the university that either validated or been contradictory to those opinions;
7. reveal their awareness of assimilation versus acculturation and how these processes have been either reinforced or discouraged in specific classroom practices they've experienced;
8. determine if their experience in the U.S. has helped promote their understanding of themselves as both Koreans and citizens of the global community.

The principal researcher conducted all interviews of both U.S. and Korean faculty members in English; the co-investigator was not present during any of the faculty interviews. Although English was the second language of most of the Korean faculty, it was assumed that this group of participants would be able to adequately express their opinions in English due to the fact that they had studied and were teaching in the United States. All faculty interviews, which took approximately 60 minutes each, were tape recorded digitally; no notes were taken, for it was felt that taking notes during the interview would distract the interviewees and make it more difficult for the researcher to ask appropriate follow-up questions. The faculty participants were informed that all interviews would be recorded.

Questions asked during the U.S. faculty interviews were also directly related to the research questions. The U.S. faculty was asked to

1. give their perceptions on how both the Korean and U.S. educational systems as well as common teaching and learning strategies are affected by culture;

2. compare and contrast the learning styles of the Korean and U.S. students; comment on changes they have observed in Korean students' learning strategies and behavior over the course of a particular class;
3. discuss their possible roles in the assimilation and/or acculturation process of Korean students;
4. identify specific teaching and learning strategies that promote acculturation;
5. analyze the effects that having Korean students in academic settings has had on their performance as teachers and on their worldviews.

Questions asked the Korean faculty addressed the research questions by attempting to incorporate the experiences of these participants as both students and faculty. These individuals were asked to

1. give their perceptions about both the Korean and U.S. education systems as well as common teaching and learning strategies are affected by culture;
2. compare and contrast common learning styles of the Korean and U.S. students as well as common teaching styles of in Korea and the U.S.;
3. comment on how their teaching styles have been affected by teaching in the U.S.;
4. discuss their possible roles in the assimilation and/or acculturation process of
5. Korean students identify specific teaching and learning strategies that promote acculturation;
6. analyze the effects that teaching and studying in the U.S. has had on their performances as teachers and on their worldviews.

**Data collection, storage and confidentiality.** To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned a number (S1-6 for students, USF1-6 for U.S. faculty, and KF1-4 for Korean

faculty), and all transcripts included this number, the date, location, and beginning and ending times of the interview. The participants' names were used in the study. All original records (including tape recordings) were stored in a secure location in the principal researcher's home and will be disposed of three years following the conclusion of the study.

**Benefits of the study.** The results of this study are intended to not only contribute to the existing body of knowledge about the process Korean students go through when studying at U.S. universities but also to provide further insight into the understanding of cross-cultural education, the process of acculturation, and the application of border pedagogy (Giroux, 2005) in U.S. classrooms in higher education institutions. Specifically, the study emphasizes teaching and learning strategies that can be used by both students and instructors to promote acculturation, examine the perceptions of students and instructors regarding the role that culture plays in the educational process, apply concepts from border pedagogy to international education, and, by taking into account the viewpoints and experiences of both students and teachers, help facilitate “dialogue” between both parties. It is also hoped that its findings will be applicable to both international students in the U.S. from other cultures, particularly from East Asia, U.S. students, particularly those who have or will have study abroad experiences, and U.S. instructors as they struggle to cope with the educational challenges of postmodernism.

From the perspective of the student participants, the study sheds light on how students view the Korean educational system and common ways of teaching and learning in their native country as well as changes that might have taken place as a result of their experience in the U.S. Information on how the students view the role instructors play in helping them to become successful students, what learning and teaching strategies they feel are the most beneficial to them in this process, whether or not the students feel pressure to assimilate, and how they believe

the experience of studying in the U.S. will impact their futures was collected and analyzed. This in-depth examination of the perspectives of this group of students is intended to further understanding of the process international students go through when studying at U.S. universities and colleges and the impact that cross-cultural educational experiences have on individuals.

In an attempt to obtain comprehensive and balanced insight into the issues dealt with in this study, the opinions of both U.S. and Korean instructors were also examined. By exploring the perceptions of these individuals on matters such as the relationship between culture and education, the processes of acculturation and assimilation, educational strategies that enable students to “cross borders,” and their role as facilitators of meaningful cross-cultural educational experiences, it is expected that awareness of each of these areas will be enhanced. In addition, by taking into account the observations of both parties in the educational process, it is hoped that this study will serve as a springboard for increased dialogue and mutual understanding.

**Risks versus benefits.** It was felt that the benefits of this study, to both individual participants and society as a whole, greatly outweighed potential risks. The risks were minimal and could easily be prevented by the safety precautions mentioned below. The likelihood that one of the participants suffered undue stress or worry by being interviewed was extremely slight whereas the conclusions that result from this study could provide meaningful support for all those involved in cross-cultural educational experiences for decades to come.

**Safety precautions.** In order to prevent the above risks, a number of protections were taken. Every attempt was made to ensure the participants that their participation was not obligatory, that their responses would not lead to negative consequences, either academically or personally, and that their responses would be confidential. To begin with, all prospective

participants were asked to read and sign an informed consent form which stated that participation was optional and that participants were free to withdraw at anytime, before taking part in the study. The forms also clearly explained the purpose of the study and steps taken to ensure confidentiality. In addition, the forms reiterated the fact that the study was not being conducted under the auspices of the university. All consent forms were written in English, but oral translations of the student forms into Korean could be given if requested.

In addition, having the co-investigator conduct the student interviews helped clarify the fact that, even though an employee of the university was the principal researcher in the study, the study was being conducted as research related to that individual's dissertation and not as part of university business.

**Changes from original design.** Due to unforeseen circumstances, there were two changes in the implementation of this study from its original design and one unexpected difficulty that arose. These factors should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of the study.

At the beginning of the study, the principal researcher had hoped to interview a total of six Korean faculty members at the university, making the total number interviewed equal to the numbers of student participants (six) and U.S. faculty participants (six); after contacting all Korean faculty employed at the university during the period of this study, it turned out that only four of the members eligible for participation in this category were able or willing to be interviewed.

In addition, one of the original criteria for U.S. faculty participants was that eligible faculty would have had a minimum of five Korean students in at least one of their classes over the previous two years. In the course of recruiting participants for the study, it was discovered

that there were few qualified faculty members willing to participate who had either had this many Korean students in their classes or were able to verify they had taught this many.

Therefore, the qualifying criteria for this category was changed to at least three Korean students in at least one class over the previous two years.

In the U.S. faculty recruiting process, it was also an initial intention of the study to verify the number of Korean students each faculty member had had in their classes over the two years by use of the university's database system. This was to be done in an attempt to ensure that each U.S. faculty member met the criteria for participation. It was discovered, however, that the university database system was set up in a manner that made this process very difficult for the principal researcher. This was an oversight of the original study design. Although the principal researcher asked each faculty participant how many Korean students they had taught over the past two years, not all the participants could recall or verify the exact number. Although it is believed all participants met this criteria, it is possible that the faculty participants did not recall correctly. Again, this factor must be taken into consideration when analyzing the data provided.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The study attempted to follow Glesne's (2006) advice that the interpretation of data should involve three steps – description, analysis, and interpretation (p. 164). In addition, the process of triangulation, as defined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), was utilized to help ensure the accuracy of the results and the conclusions that stem from them. When coding, the researchers attempted to identify regularities and patterns that emerged from the data rather than rely on a “preassigned coding system” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 180). This was done in order not to preclude or overlook any themes that might arise in the course of analyzing the data.

At the descriptive stage, the researchers tape recorded all interviews. Following the student interviews, the co-investigator provided a copy of the each interview recording to the principal researcher, who then did the first translation of the recording from Korean to English and wrote the transcripts in English. Again, the principal researcher was not informed of the identity of the student participants. Once the first translation was completed, the principal researcher sent a copy of the English transcripts of each interview to the co-investigator so he could double-check their accuracy. If there were questions about or discrepancies between the two translations, the two researchers met to review the recordings and agree on the final translations. The co-investigator then provided a copy of the English transcripts to the student participant as another method of confirming their accuracy and providing the student participant the opportunity to make additional comments. The student participants were also informed that if they felt there were inaccuracies in the transcripts, they had the opportunity to contact the co-investigator regarding this matter.

Following the faculty interviews, the interview transcripts were written by the principal investigator. Each faculty participant was also given a copy of the transcripts and asked to review these documents for accuracy. All inaccuracies or typos discovered were corrected.

When developing a preliminary coding system, each of the coding categories recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) were taken into consideration, but particular attention will be paid to *strategy codes*, *relationship and social structure codes*, and *subjects' ways of thinking about people and objects*. According to Bogdan and Biklen, "Strategies refer to the tactics, methods, techniques, maneuvers, ploys, and other conscious ways people accomplish various things" (p. 177). This particular category was employed due to the study's interest in identifying certain teaching and learning strategies. *Relationship and social structure codes* deal

with not only the social structure of the environment in which the study is taking place but also “patterns of behavior” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 177). This coding category was emphasized primarily because of the interest this study has in the impact that cross-cultural social environments have on the educational process. The final category, *subjects’ ways of thinking about people and objects*, “...gets at the subjects’ understanding of each other, of outsiders, and of the objects that make up their world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 175). Since the nature of this study has to do with individual humans and their perceptions of each other, the adaption of this category was a necessity. All coding categories were assigned to *units of data* (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 185), and abbreviations for the coding categories were also assigned.

At the interpretation stage, the coding categories that have been identified were further explored and interpreted by the principal researcher in an attempt to reach conclusions about the relevance of the material. Since one of the major goals of the study was to determine whether tenets from Giroux’s (2005) border pedagogy can be applied to the acculturation of Korean students at U.S. universities, one way to conduct this interpretation was to review the findings in light of this theory. For example, data collected related to the student’s view of changes in their learning styles since coming to the U.S. was looked at in terms of assimilation versus acculturation and discussed as possibly resulting from a form of hegemony. In addition, strategies identified by participants as helpful to the process of acculturation were compared with strategies suggested by Giroux (2005) and others that enable those involved in education to *cross borders*. Once these final interpretations were made, the principal researcher then shared his interpretations of the data with the co-investigator to get his feedback and suggestions for possible revision, verify their accuracy, and add a measure of triangulation to the process. If differences in themes and commonalities existed, a third researcher was available to review and

interpret the material in question. Every attempt was made to create coding categories that represented a synthesis of the two researchers' interpretations.

### **Conclusion**

On the one hand, qualitative studies of this kind that attempt to identify shared meanings that spring from the experiences of individuals run the risk of engendering the generalizations and stereotypes they attempt to avoid. One of the aims of this study was to explore the experiences of Korean students and their instructors in the U.S. and to discover themes and principles that might apply to other groups of individuals going through similar experiences. It was not the goal of this study, however, to make sweeping statements about certain groups of people or oversimplify the complex issues involved. In interpreting the results of this study, this fact should not be forgotten.

There is also the acknowledgement that, whenever students from one part of the world come and study in another part of the world, a certain amount of assimilation will occur. For Korean students to be successful students in the United States, it is inevitable that, in many ways, they will *become Americanized*. The goal of this study was not to completely erase the process of assimilation, even if that were possible. The goal was to minimize its effects and to promote the process of acculturation, a process that facilitates true dialogue between learners and teachers, diminishes the *us versus them mentality*, and invites humans to explore their full potential. As Giroux (2005) reiterates:

At stake here is an important theoretical issue that is worth repeating. Knowledge and power come together not to merely reaffirm difference but to also interrogate it, to open up broader theoretical considerations, to tease out its limitations, and to

engage a vision of community in which student voices define themselves in terms of their distinct social formations and their broader collective hopes. (p. 27)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Findings

#### Introduction

This study aimed at answering seven research questions through a series of in-depth interviews that were conducted over a period of seven months with three groups of individuals: six students from the Republic of Korea who were enrolled in an institution of higher education in the United States, six tenured faculty members from the United States who had taught Korean students at the university, and four faculty members at the university who were originally from South Korea. The responses of these participants not only shed light on the issues dealt with in the research questions but also have implications for global awareness and understanding.

In this section, *common themes* were defined as observations made or opinions expressed by five or more participants from any of the three categories (student, U.S. faculty, Korean faculty). *Less common themes* were statements that were made by fewer than five participants from any or all of the three categories. This “cut off” was made since four represents only 25% of the total number of participants; it was determined that this percentage was more representative of the minority point of view than an indication of a consensus about a particular issue. If only one participant made a comment or observation, those were recorded as *other comments*. *Divergent themes* were sharply contrasting views that were made by a minority of participants (e.g., if most participants had the same observations but a few pointed out that there

may be exceptions to this observation). Finally, *comparison of responses* were included in some sections to discuss notable differences in the responses from different groups participants (e.g., if the U.S. faculty responded differently than the Korean faculty did) or within groups of participants (e.g., if the undergraduate students responded differently than the graduate students did).

### **Profile of Participants**

**Student participants.** All students who were interviewed for this study were citizens of the Republic of Korea who were in the United States on F-1 (student non-immigrant) visas. These students had all been enrolled at the university for at least one year and had maintained a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0. The fact that these students had been academically successful at the university should be taken into consideration when interpreting their responses; in other words, it is possible that less successful students would have responded differently. An examination of the student participants (labeled S1 through S6) reveals that three were male and three were female. Three of the interviewees were undergraduate students while three were enrolled in graduate programs (two at the master's level and one at the doctoral level). The students' majors were Music Education, Business Administration, Curriculum and Instruction, Construction Management, and Linguistics (Teaching English as a Second Language), and their ages ranged from 21 to 42. Three of the students had met the English proficiency requirement for the university by graduating from a private intensive English language program in the United States prior to matriculating into the university, and three had met the English proficiency requirement by submitting sufficient Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores.

S1 was a female aged 28 studying at the master's level. She had been a student at the university for one year and had attended a private intensive English language program located on the university campus for about ten months before graduating from that program and beginning her academic studies at the university. She had also completed a master's degree program in Korea before coming to the United States to continue her studies. She stated that her plans following graduation from her current program were to either apply to a Ph.D. program in the U.S. or return to Korea to work for either the government or as a professor.

S2 was a 28 year old male who had been at the university for one year and eight months. He had transferred as an undergraduate from a Korean university and had graduated from a private intensive English language program on the university campus. His plans following graduation were to either get a job in the U.S. (his first choice) or find employment in Korea.

S3 was the only doctoral student in the study. He was a 36 year old male who had had received a Masters degree from the university prior to beginning his doctoral program. S3 had met the university's English proficiency requirement by submitting a sufficient TOEFL score; he had not attended any other schools in the U.S. before beginning his master's program in the U.S. S3 had been an English teacher in Korea in the past. At this point, he stated, he hoped to return to Korea following his studies in the U.S. to continue in that field at either a university or institute.

S4 was a 30 year old male undergraduate student. He had graduated from high school in Korea and completed his freshman year in college there before withdrawing and coming to the U.S. to study. He had been a student at the university and at a private intensive English language program on the university campus for a total of four years and ten months. His plans following graduation were to return to Korea to look for a job.

S5 was a master's degree female student. She was 42 years old and had met the English proficiency requirement of the university by submitting an acceptable TOEFL score. She had received her bachelor's degree in Korea and had not attended any other school in the U.S. prior to enrolling at the university. S5 had also served as an English teacher in Korea and planned to return to teaching English in Korea after receiving her master's degree.

S6 was the youngest participant. She was a 21 year old female. Before starting her current program, she had graduated from high school in Korea and attended a private intensive English language program on the university campus for one year. She did not meet the English proficiency requirement of the university by graduating from that program, however; she met this requirement by submitting a sufficient TOEFL score. She had been a student at the university for two years at the time of this study and wasn't sure of her future plans but hoped to work in her field in either the U.S. or Korea.

**U.S. faculty participants.** The six faculty members (labeled USF1 through USF6) in this group were all tenured and had taught at the university for at least six years. In addition, all of the faculty members were citizens of the United States; none had been citizens of the Republic of Korea at any time (in fact, none of them had even traveled to Korea). English was the first language of all these participants. All U.S. faculty members had taught three or more Korean students in the previous two years. The group as a whole had a total of 105 years teaching experience at the university; the length of their time at the university ranged from ten years to over thirty years. Four were male and two female. The faculty members were teaching either Linguistics, Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Athletic Training and Sport Management, Business, Communication, or Human Resource Development. All of the individuals had taught both undergraduate and graduate courses.

USF1 had been a faculty member at the university for approximately 19 years. She was female and had a doctorate degree in Linguistics. She taught both undergraduate and graduate students and estimated that about 80% to 90% of her students were international. She stated that she generally had at least two or three Korean students in each of her classes. USF1 mentioned that her overseas experience included studying abroad in Germany and traveling in Europe and Morocco.

USF2, also a faculty member was male and had a degree in Sociolinguistics. Most recently, he had taught graduate level courses. USF2 estimated that approximately 60% of the students in his classes were international students; a number of those Koreans. His teaching experience included one year teaching in Japan, which he described as “one of the best years of my life.”

USF3 was male and had been a faculty member at the university for 26 years, he stated. His doctorate degree was in Higher Education Administration. At the time of the interview, he had nine international students in his classes; two were from Korea. He stated that he’d taught “a lot of Korean students” in the previous decade.

USF4 was also a male faculty member. His Ph.D. was in Management, specifically Operations Management. He had taught at the university for “a little over 30 years.” He primarily taught undergraduate courses, and although he couldn’t recall the exact number of international students in his classes, stated that “it used to be about 10%,” “a few of them” being from Korea.

USF5 was a male faculty member who had a total of six degrees, the highest being a doctorate in Speech Communication. He had been at the university for 14 years and taught both undergraduate and graduate courses in his department. USF5 stated that has had many

international students at both levels for “a long time” and that several of these students have been Korean. He also mentioned that he enjoyed traveling abroad and has been to the Middle East and several European countries.

USF6 was a female faculty member who had been a professor at the university since 2000. She was an associate professor who taught both undergraduate and graduate courses. She stated that she had had “a fairly large population of international students” in her classes and that several of those at the graduate level had been from Korea. She mentioned that two of her former Korean students had once been graduate assistants working for her. USF6 had traveled to Europe, several of the Caribbean countries, Mexico, and Canada and was hoping to teach a “study abroad” course at some point in the future.

**Korean faculty participants.** All four of the Korean faculty members (KF1 through KF4) interviewed were either assistant or associate male professors at the university at the time of the study. They had all been born in and were or had been citizens of the Republic of Korea. Korean was the first language of all these participants, although one of the faculty members (KF3) had moved to the U.S. when he was nine years-old. The four were teaching either Communication, Education, Criminology, or Risk Management and Insurance. The length of time these individuals had been teaching in the U.S. ranged from two years to nine years; four of them had taught at the university for approximately one year, and one of them had been teaching at the university for three years. All four faculty members had received doctorate degrees in the United States and only had some teaching experience in Korea, although not at the university level.

KF1 had been a faculty member teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses at the university for one year. He had received a bachelor’s degree in Korea before coming to the U.S.

to obtain another bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a Ph.D. in Mass Communication. Including his time as a graduate assistant, he had taught in the U.S. for five years. He stated that, during his time at the university, he had only had two non-Korean East Asian students in his classes but that he had taught several Korean students at another university.

KF2 had a doctorate degree in Elementary Education and had also been at the university for one year. He received a bachelor degree in Korea and had started a master's degree there as well before he withdrew from that program and came to the U.S. to obtain both his master's and Ph.D. He had had two years of teaching experience in the U.S. and taught undergraduate courses in his current position. He recalled having two Taiwanese students and one auditing Korean student in his classes at the university.

KF3 had been living in the U.S. longer than any of the Korean faculty participants; He had completed fourth grade in Korea before immigrating to the U.S. with his family. He had received a bachelor's degree, two master's degrees, and a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice in the U.S. and had been teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses for three years at the university at the time of the study. He recalled only having a couple of Japanese students in his classes at the university, none from Korea. KF3 had nine years of teaching experience at the university level.

KF4 had received a bachelor's degree in Korea before coming to the U.S. at first study English in a language institute located on a university campus. Once at the language program, he said, "I became fond of studying in America in a college setting," so he enrolled in university classes and ended up receiving another bachelor's degree, a master's degree and a Ph.D. in Business with a Risk Management emphasis. He had taught for six years as an assistant professor at another institution prior to being his work with the current university.

## **Impressions of Korean and U.S. Education Systems and Their Participants**

The first two research questions dealt with how participants viewed both the Korean and United States' education systems as well as what their impressions of common teaching and learning styles in both countries were. Research Question One was: "How do both students and faculty view the Korean education system and teaching and learning strategies common in Korea as being influenced by culture?" Question Two was: "How do both students and faculty view the U.S. education system and teaching and learning strategies common in the U.S. as being influenced by culture?"

Although questions pertaining to Research Question One and questions pertaining to Research Question Two were asked separately during the interviews, there was a tendency on the part of both student and faculty participants to immediately compare the two systems in their responses. For example, when asked about their impressions of the Korean education system, most respondents also spoke about the U.S. system as a means of direct comparison; therefore, discussing the responses for both these research questions in the same section was appropriate.

Common themes that arose from the responses of participants regarding these two questions were general impressions of the education systems, classroom behavior, student/teacher relationships, common teaching strategies, common learning strategies, forms of assessment, and influences on education in both countries. Each of these areas is discussed in terms of common threads identified from the responses as well as divergent themes that emerged from the responses of the three groups of respondents.

**Education systems.** All participants were asked to relate their general impressions of both the Korean and U.S. education systems. Comments made about classroom behavior, teaching and learning strategies, student and teacher relationships, assessment, and influences on

education were not included in this area. These themes were identified and are discussed at in other sections of this chapter.

*Korea.* When asked about their general impressions of the Korean education system, the most common themes that arose among the participants were that the system was test-based, stressed English language learning, relied heavily on private educational institutes, had overcrowded classrooms, and was organized in a structured or hierarchical manner. Less common comments included the perception that the academic rigor at the university level is much less than at elementary and secondary levels of education, the belief that the system promotes competitiveness, the observation that the structure of the system mirrors the U.S. system of education (in terms of the number of levels – primary, middle, high school and college – and the number of grades), the feeling that students take many subjects each semester, and the thought that subjects university students take do not often match their interests and/or future needs. One U.S. faculty participant (USF5) also mentioned her impression that the Korean education system held students to “high standards,” based on the academic performance she’d observed from her Korean students in the U.S.

Regarding the most common themes, six respondents (S2, S5, KF1, KF3, KF4, and US5) felt that the Korean education system makes use of a series of high stakes standardized tests, the most important being the college entrance exam. According to S2:

It seems like the main goal of the Korean education system is to prepare students to go to the university. Because of that, the focus of students in elementary, middle, and high schools is to prepare for the college entrance exam, and they have much stress because of that.

S5 reiterated this feeling by stating:

When you're in middle school, you concentrate on passing the high school exam. When you're in high school you concentrate on studying for the college exam instead of content and other non tested-related studies. They teach to the test, so it's difficult to focus on other subjects and studies.

An emphasis on English language education was also mentioned by six participants (S6, KF1, KF2, KF3, KF4, and USF1). This has led, believed KF2 and KF3, to the improvement in the English proficiency of many younger Koreans compared to Koreans of the past. "English is a must," stated KF4. KF3 joked, "You know, they take English classes probably from birth now." In the opinion of S6, Korean education stresses English education because of the fact that many companies in Korea look for prospective employees with good English skills. "So the education system emphasizes learning English more than ever before," she reported. KF4 suggested that due to the increasing competitiveness for jobs Korean universities these days are emphasizing more English instruction to a great degree than in the past. "They don't want their students to graduate without having jobs" he said. "Therefore they are putting additional requirements on students for English. That's in addition to what they have to study for their majors."

One method of promoting English learning is through the system of private educational institutes; the existence and importance of these institutes in Korean education was mentioned by five participants (S5, S6, KF3, KF4, and USF1). One student (S5) and one faculty member (KF3) maintained that private education is so strong in Korea that it influences what goes on in the public schools. "The prepping industry, the *hakweons* (private institutes) and stuff (sic) parallels the government run education system in Korea, and if you don't have the money to send your kids to those types of institutes, beginning from elementary to middle school to high school, your

chances of entering a university are slim to none,” said KF3. Another interviewee (S6) mirrored this contention when she said she felt that attending private institutes was an important means of becoming a successful student in Korea.

The observation that there are many students in one classroom was made by six participants (S4, S6, KF1, KF2, KF3, and KF4). S4 reported, “From what I remember, there were so many students sitting in one class that I couldn’t hear what the teacher was saying.” KF1 recalled having fifty or more students in one class when he was in high school, and KF2, when speaking about the impact of these large classes on teachers, stated, “I don’t know how they handle it because there are (from 60 to 90) students in each class, without any graduate assistant.”

A less common theme about the Korean education system that was mentioned was the observation that schools were structured in a hierarchal fashion. Three faculty members and one student (S5, KF1, USF1, and USF5) felt that administrative organization of the school system and schools themselves was more vertical than horizontal. KF1 called this “an inverted pyramid style.” S5 believed this structure was a reflection of Korean society as a whole. “Korean education is influenced by the Korean social structure, hierarchical structure,” she reported.

Among the other impressions reported, the belief that studying at the university level was easier than studying at lower levels of education was mentioned by four participants (S2, KF1, KF3, and KF4). S2 stated that once students pass the university entrance exam and are admitted into a college, “they think they’ve accomplished what they needed to and they don’t study hard; they just want to be free.” KF3, implying that the academic rigor of U.S. universities is more demanding than the academic rigor of Korean universities, added:

By the time they enter college it's pretty easy sailing from there; it's the initial act of getting into college that is difficult. It's a running joke in the Korean community that the most unfortunate Koreans are ones who graduate from high school in Korea and attend college in the U.S.

It was important to note, KF4 pointed out, that this trend might be changing due to current economic conditions in Korea and the competitiveness that has resulted for the increasing difficulty to find employment after graduating from the university

*United States.* Common themes that emerged when participants were asked to share their perceptions of the U.S. education system were that schools emphasized experiential/practical learning, promoted the independence and self-sufficiency of students, and were run like businesses. Other comments made about the U.S. school system were that the system was bureaucratic and lacked leadership, served a diverse student population, attempted to meet the needs of all students, and was set up in a "meritorious" manner.

Three students and two U.S. faculty members (S1, S3, S4, USF1, and USF5) felt that the U.S. education system promoted experiential or practical learning. The respondents described this learning as "hands-on," "practical," and "realistic" and included examples of community engagement projects, internships, and field trips as being of this nature. Speaking of his particular discipline, USF5 stated, "Experiential learning is not a new concept to me, and it's not a new concept to our discipline; we've been doing it a long time." S3 stated his belief that the U.S. education system tried "...to tie learning to the society at large." S1 described the experience of student teaching in her major as "helpful" and said that internships and "opportunities to practice what we are learning" are more prevalent in the U.S. than in Korea.

An additional theme that appeared in the responses of some of the participants was the belief that the education system in the U.S. attempted to make students more independent and self-sufficient. Four students and two faculty members (S1, S3, S4, S5, KF3 and USF4) mentioned this feeling. Whether this observed phenomenon is a direct result of the structuring of U.S. schools or more of an observation based on the participants' classroom experiences is unclear. Examples given for this perception included class projects and assignments that promoted independent thought and the lack of ability for students to rely on teachers for "direct guidance." S5 observed, "The American education system doesn't give students detailed instructions. The system just gives them the direction, but the students have to find the answers so that students can seek the answers by themselves." USF4 explained how he tries to encourage this self-sufficiency in his classes:

Part of my pedagogy is not allowing them (students) to come to me for approaches. So sometimes they stumble and I'm biting my tongue not to give them the solution because at this point they really need to take a lot more responsibility for thinking about what's important.

The only other faculty comment in this area was from KF3, who said, "The role of the teacher with motivated students is just to be a facilitator and guide – tell them which direction to go to. But the journey is their own."

Four faculty participants (KF1, KF2, KF3, and USF2) expressed the belief that U.S. schools were run in a corporate manner and that there was a perception by some that the main goal of education was job training. KF1 stated this contention concisely by saying, "The American education system is like a business, like an industry." Part of the reason for this, he

stated, was the tendency on the part of many students to mostly see higher education as a means of obtaining jobs. Universities, he continued

. . . are a starting place for students to find a good job. I totally understand because we are living under the capitalistic, very skewed capitalistic ideology. We cannot escape from this kind of current phenomenon. But on the other hand, we should think about the other aspects we are losing right now.

USF2 was adamant in his belief that some students are concerned about just obtaining a diploma and getting a job and that the universities were strongly motivated by financial concerns, which could result in an emphasis on increasing enrollment and retention. He explained:

I think there's a pressure, whether it's explicit or not, to move students along, to say whatever we do is enough. . . . Okay, I guess it's important that the student body grows. I mean, if you're not growing, you're dying - that's what we hear from business anyway. But it seems to me that the university, which is supposed to be the place we deal in rationality and reason and the application of our minds to problems – that's getting pushed more and more and more to the periphery.

KF3 echoed this sentiment by saying:

I think the U.S. education system is driven largely by its economic system. . . . I feel that that's the overriding ideology of higher education in the United States. Just funding, funding, funding. It's mass production extended to its logical conclusion and applied to an academic setting.

***Comparison of responses.*** In addition to revealing several commonalities, a review of the responses in this category brought to light several differences in the ways in which the three groups of participants responded. It is clear that the majority of comments made about the

Korean education system came from the students and Korean faculty participants. In fact, many of the U.S. faculty participants admitted that they had few if any impressions of the system in general; the impressions they related primarily pertained to other areas of this section. Likewise, comments made by the student participants were more related to specific observations they had based on personal experience than to impressions of American education in general.

As a whole, it appeared that the students were more negative about or critical of the Korean education system than the U.S. education system. In addition, the U.S. faculty members seemed more negative about or critical of the U.S. education system than the students were. The Korean faculty members, on the other hand, seemed equally critical of and positive about both systems.

**Classroom Behavior.** Several of the observations made were related to the way that both students and teachers behaved in classrooms in both Korea and the U.S. These responses emerged when participants were either asked specifically about classroom behavior or when they were asked about general differences between Korean and U.S. education systems.

**Korea.** Both student and faculty participants shared many of their impressions about the way in which Korean students and teachers behaved in the classroom in Korea. It is important to be cognizant of the fact that the impressions of the students and Korean faculty in this study were based on firsthand experiences whereas U.S. faculty was basing their impressions on what they had heard or read about. It was also unclear whether some of the remarks made by U.S. faculty about classroom behavior were based on direct observations they had made of Korean students in the U.S. or had to do with their conceptions of how Korean students typically behave in Korea.

The two most common themes identified in this area were students' lack of oral participation and reluctance to ask questions. Other comments made were that students observe

certain rules of Korean etiquette such as not wearing shoes or hats in class and not eating in the classroom. One U.S. faculty participant also believed that Korean teachers do not wear casual attire in the classroom. Additional comments related to classroom behavior can be found in the sections on common teaching and learning strategies.

Fifteen of the 16 participants (S1 through S6, KF1, KF2, KF3, USF1 through USF6) remarked that there is very little discussion or oral participation in Korean classrooms. “In most university classes the teachers speak, and the students sit and listen quietly,” stated S2. One of the reasons given for this lack of oral participation was the fact that Korean teachers did not generally encourage discussion. “It would be seen as bothering or interfering with the class,” said S3. Another reason stated had to do with Korean culture. S1 stated, “I believe culture has some affect. In Korea, it’s more common for students not to speak in class... Korean students are more reserved.”

Related to this was a tendency for students in Korean schools to refrain from asking questions during class; this was reported by all the student participants and four of the U.S. faculty participants (USF2, USF3, USF5, and USF6). S5 explained, “Korean professors don’t want their teaching to be interrupted by questions. American students ask questions during the class, but Korean professors don’t like that style. Korean students have to wait until the professor asks if we have any questions.” S6 also felt that Korean teachers did not encourage students to ask questions during class. “I hardly ever asked questions in class because of the class environment,” she said. “Even if I asked a question, the answer was usually so simple and not helpful that I gave up trying to ask questions.” Another reason given for the inclination to refrain from asking questions in class was related to the style of instruction. In the opinion of USF5:

The students are there to absorb from the teacher, and to largely make sure that the teacher doesn't lose face, and that the teacher's expertise is mostly upheld, and therefore things like asking questions may be not always encouraged...those are the impressions I have from talking to Korean students.

***United States.*** Conversely, the most common theme reported in regard to classroom behavior in the United States was that many students are active and outspoken in the classroom. It was also mentioned that U.S. students and faculty acted informally; examples of this informal behavior were wearing casual clothing (both students and teachers), eating in the classroom, wearing hats, and slouching in desks or chairs.

The participants who felt that U.S. students spoke frequently in classes (S1, S2, S3, S6, KF1, USF3 through USF6), listed taking part in class discussions, working in groups, asking and answering questions, and giving presentations as examples of this participation. In S1's opinion

There are cases when this isn't true, but I think American students are generally more active in their learning than Korean students. They don't mind trying to answer questions even if they think they may be wrong. They aren't shy about trying. They don't have to worry about other students thinking badly about them if they make a mistake.

When asked why it was common for U.S. students to speak in class, S3 said

I think they are basically encouraged by the teachers or professors to speak out. In Korea, if you say what you are thinking two or three times during class, whether you're right or wrong, it's seen as an interruption of the class and the teacher or lecturer will scold you or look down on this behavior. In America, they accept this behavior and even try to develop students' ability to speak.

USF5 seemed to concur with this perception and explained

I think it was best said by a young woman I met from Sri Lanka whose father said to her, ‘They do not care what you know in America; they only care if you can talk about it.’ I think that’s so telling, right? It’s this idea that we believe in the power and the learning capability of rhetoric. We believe what we in our discipline say is that communication is epistemic, that in the process of communicating you discover knowledge.

***Divergent themes.*** It was interesting to note that some participants disagreed slightly with the perception that there is little or no oral participation in Korean university classrooms and much oral participation in U.S. classrooms. One of the students (S5) and two of Korean faculty members (KF2 and KF4) seemed to feel that Korean students are more outspoken and “active” in class these days than in the past. This has to do with the fact that some younger faculty members have “less traditional” ideas about classroom management, said KF2. “Some young people are dynamic and active. Their idea is very liberal and they use a different teaching approach, for example like using drama to teach English conversation or maybe using movies to teach English literature.”

In the same vein, two faculty members (KF3 and USF2) expressed the opinion that U.S. classrooms perhaps aren’t as interactive as some might suppose. “It’s not *that* interactive here,” stated KF3. USF2, while stressing that as a teacher he attempts to get students to speak in class, remarked

Generally speaking, any professor that I would regard as worthy of the name is looking for interaction. You don’t just sit and scribble things down. Of course I would be happy if some of my students would even do that...I think engagement is really important. I

would say that it's really an idealization based on what I see in my classes is (sic) that most American students are doing well if they get their blood pressure to show up.

**Comparison of responses.** Comparing the responses of the groups of participants about this theme, it was noticeable that only one of the Korean faculty shared the perception that U.S. university students spoke frequently in classes whereas three of the faculty in this group remarked on the lack of oral participation in Korean classrooms. Likewise, all of the student participants and U.S. faculty commented on the lack of oral participation in Korea, but only four in each of these two groups spoke of active oral participation on the part of U.S. students. An equal number of undergraduate and graduate students remarked on this latter perception.

**Student/Teacher relationships.** Although not specifically asked about the relationship between teachers and students in both countries, this theme emerged when participants were describing teaching and learning, classroom behavior, and the education systems in Korea and the U.S. Several of the observations made about this theme are also interrelated to common teaching and learning strategies.

**Korea.** There were two common themes identified which were related to the relationship between teachers and students in Korea. One was the notion that teachers should be treated with respect by students; the other was a belief that teachers were figures of authority who should be listened to and not questioned. Other comments made about this relationship, such as the observation that students address teachers formally, that there is little communication between students and teachers, and that teachers have "a high image" of themselves, could be seen as having some relationship to these two common themes.

Ten of the participants (S1, S3, S6, KF2, KF3, KF4, USF1, USF3, USF4, and USF5) felt that Korean students were taught to treat their teachers with respect and that this was evident in

the relationship between the two parties. Some believed this respect stemmed from social and cultural traditions. USF1 related, “Someone who’s taught there has said that in Korea, I forget the order but the teachers are at the top of the order – it’s parents, kings, and then teachers at the top.” S6 reiterated that belief by stating, “In Korean culture, teachers are treated like parents; we’re taught that we have to be respectful to them.” Because of this, she continued, “It’s hard to be very relaxed, not just because of the teachers; it’s the way we’re taught to act towards teachers.” According to the three U.S. faculty members who made this observation, this respect was evident in some Korean students in the U.S., that many of their Korean students were very polite and deferential to them. USF5 became quite moved when relating the story of one of his former students from Korea who invited him to his home for a traditional Korean meal as a token of his appreciation. “I thought it was such an absolute compliment to be invited to their home, to be treated with that kind of esteem.”

An outgrowth of this respect can perhaps be evidenced in the manner in which students and teachers interact with each other. Seven of the participants (S1, S3, S4, S6, KF4, USF1, USF2, USF4, and USF5) remarked that Korean teachers are often viewed as ultimate authorities who are not to be challenged or approached. On the one hand, this perception can encourage students to listen carefully to what their teachers say as well as follow their advice. One thing U.S. professors should realize about Korean students, says S4, is that “they will do whatever you ask them to.” When asked about some of his strengths as a student, S3 replied, “First of all, just like most Korean students, I am totally obedient to the teacher or professor. I follow the teacher no matter if they are correct or wrong – listening to or paying attention to whatever the teacher says.” “What the teacher says is ‘the law,’” reflected S1. “It is most common for students to follow or just do what the teacher says to.” USF2 echoed this sentiment by stating, “What

impresses me a lot is that willingness (on the part of Korean students), that eagerness to get direction and their willingness to follow it.”

On the other hand, the image of teacher as being somewhat “revered” or “untouchable” can have what some participants described in what was interpreted as a negative manner. This view has a large impact not only on classroom behavior but also on the learning process, according to S3, a former language instructor, who put it this way:

In Korea, students are treated like they are only temporary customers or visitors. . . . Also, Korean teachers act like they are the owners of the schools and the classrooms. This type of invisible, behind-the-scenes thought interferes with the process of learning. Students are the ‘objects’ (as in the ‘object’ of a sentence) and teachers are the ‘subjects.’

Seven of the above respondents (all but USF4) also observed that this view of teachers might be partly responsible for creating a distance between educators and learners, discouraging students from seeking help and/or advice from their instructors, and showing disagreement with or doubt about what teachers say. KF4 spoke of a “barrier” outside the door of the teachers’ offices that was often difficult for students to “climb over” when they needed help. When asked who his favorite teachers in Korea were, S4 laughed and said, “Any teacher who knew me or remembered my name. . . . instead of just calling out ‘hey you,’ they called me by name.”

Describing her impression of some of her previous university professors, S6 said, “In college there weren’t many professors that impressed me. . . . if there was something I couldn’t understand, I had to take extra time to figure it out by myself because the professors didn’t help me.” This inability to contact teachers might also have to do with the fact that many Korean professors do not have office hours, according to S3. “The only time to have contact with the professors is in the classroom,” he said. USF2 echoed the belief that Korean students and university professors

rarely have out-of-class contact with each other by telling of an episode he had with a former Korean graduate student who came by his office frequently to argue about a grade he had given her. When he would not change the grade, this student expressed her frustration by saying, “You know, I think a Korean professor would do this.” USF2 responded, he described as “his self-serving impression,” that he didn’t think a Korean professor would have even had that conversation with her. Speaking of how hesitant some students are to disagree with teachers, S4 stated, “In Korea if the teacher makes a mistake and a student raises his hands and says, ‘Teacher, that doesn’t seem to be right,’ the teacher just erases what they wrote but doesn’t react.”

***United States.*** The most common themes identified in this area were observations that teachers are approachable and that students can disagree with or complain to teachers. In general, it was felt that the relationship between students and teachers was “informal.” A less common theme was the fact that most teachers expect students to contact them outside of class to get help. Another comment made (by a Korean faculty member) was that students are not aware of how much work teachers in the U.S. have to do.

Nine participants (S1, S2, S3, S4, S6, KF1, USF3, USF4, USF5, and USF6) expressed the opinion that university professors in the U.S. are approachable. Examples given of this perception were that teachers encourage discussion and questions in class, are available after class hours, and act informally in the classroom. In the words of S6, “American professors are like ‘uncles,’ like regular guys or even friends. If you don’t know something, they help you until you understand.” When asked her overall opinion of her U.S. professors, S6 answered, “Most of them seem pretty relaxed. Even when they challenge students, they approach it in an open-minded manner and are willing to discuss the students’ opinions.” Regarding contact with teachers outside the class, S3 said, “Here, students can go see the professor after class during his

or her office hours if there is something they don't understand." As one way of informing Korean students that it's okay to act informally in his classroom, USF3 lets them know that it's okay if they don't address him as "Doctor." "As long as they're respectful I don't really care one way or the other." Both the U.S. faculty members who made comments about this theme also stated the need for teachers to "build bridges" so that students feel comfortable enough to come to teachers for help. In the case of Korean students, stated USF5, it's important that teachers "initiate" that relationship. In addition, he stated

I've always been committed to students as people first and as learners second. So for me, while learning is vital – that's what it's all about –that's not going to happen if I don't respect these people and we don't develop a relationship that is mutually beneficial and mutually respected.

USF6 also felt that demonstrating respect and kindness to students was one of the most important roles of teachers. "My main philosophy of teaching is - the students want to know that you care before they care how much you know," she said.

Perhaps related to the perceived informality between teachers and students was the idea expressed by five participants (S1, S4, S6, USF1, USF2, and USF3) that "challenging" or disagreeing with teachers was accepted in the U.S. This included expressing a different opinion than the teacher's and pointing out possible errors made by the teacher. S1 stated, "Here, it's okay to argue or disagree with the professor; when I first came here I was surprised to see that," and S4 observed, "In America, when a student challenges a teacher, it can become a point of discussion." Explaining her reaction to students pointing out mistakes or asking her questions she doesn't know the answer to, USF1 explained

It's very common for me to say, 'Hey, I don't know the answer to that – let me get back to you about that' or 'why don't you do that for homework to figure that out?' (laughed). That's no problem for an American professor. We don't expect to know everything...I just do the best I can.

A less common theme in this area was the belief some teachers had about the need for students to come seek their advice or ask for help after class. This is related to the issue of approachability but also speaks about expectations on the part of teachers about the relationship between themselves and the learners in their classes. Four U.S. faculty (USF1, USF2, USF3, and USF5) mentioned this expectation. When speaking of advice he would give Korean students, USF3 said

The other thing I tell them is you need to, you need to ask questions if you're having problems, and if you're afraid to do it in class go immediately to the professor after the class and ask the questions. Because if you don't you're not going to do well.

***Comparison of responses.*** Noticeable in this section is the fact that there seemed to be much agreement between the student and U.S. faculty participants; members of both these two groups seemed to feel that Korean teachers are respected and are seen as figures of authority and that U.S. teachers are approachable and open to being questioned. Missing from this category are comments from Korean faculty participants, however. The few remarks they made were almost completely about the relationship between teachers and students in Korea.

In general, the students seemed to have what were interpreted as more negative comments about their relationships with Korean teachers and more positive comments about their relationships with U.S. teachers. It also appeared as though some of the U.S. faculty felt almost envious of the respect given Korean faculty; they seemed to greatly appreciate the

deference given them by Korean students and even compared this deference with a “lack of respect” they sometimes perceived receiving from U.S. students.

Three of the U.S. faculty members (USF2, USF3, and USF4) commented that it was common for Korean students to negotiate for grades. These three participants gave specific examples of students coming to them in their offices and either complaining about a grade they had received or asking for a change in grade. It was unclear whether they felt this was just a trend for Korean students in the U.S. or whether it was a common practice in Korea. Only one of the Korean participants (KF4) hinted that the practice of grade negotiation with teachers might also occur in Korea. These days, he said, “Students are so obsessed with getting good grades, so they now challenge their professors more.” He went on to add that when he was a university student in Korea, this was unthinkable.

Finally, it should be noted that only U.S. faculty members expressed the belief that U.S. teachers expect students to come to them for help. While some students mentioned the approachability of U.S. teachers, they did not indicate they were aware of the fact that teachers might “expect” students to contact them for assistance.

**Common teaching strategies.** Related to student/teacher relationships were comments that were made about the way teachers teach in both countries. These observations were based on either the firsthand experiences of both Korean students and the Korean faculty members or, in the case of U.S. faculty, on secondhand impressions in respect to Korean teaching strategies. This difference in viewpoints is important to keep in mind when reviewing the findings in this section.

**Korea.** When asked to describe common teaching strategies in Korea, the overwhelming majority of participants (all but two) suggested that a lecture-style of instruction was prevalent.

Other common themes were the attention paid to test-taking and the use of discipline and negative reinforcement. Less common themes that emerged were the use of textbooks, homework assignments, and some technology and group work (by younger faculty members).

All student participants and Korean faculty participants and four of the U.S. faculty participants (USF1, USF2, USF5, and USF6) stated that a lecture-style approach to teaching was still common in Korean schools. USF5 described this as a “dissemination of information through lecture,” and KF3 felt, “it’s still that ‘teacher imparts knowledge to the students and they dutifully write the wisdoms that the teacher imparts on the students.’” The firsthand observations and experiences of the students seemed to confirm this opinion. When asked to describe the teaching style, all six student participants specifically used the word “lecture” (some even in English). Although admitting that his experience as a university student in Korea was a while ago and that things might have changed, KF2 stated that, in particular, older faculty members in Korea relied on this technique:

Many of them (older Korean teachers), they use like a teaching manual all the time, the same manual – I can notice that because they are old papers, they are kind of old, discolored, yellow papers...it’s so old but they are still using it – only using the blackboard and the textbook and their old manual.

S4’s recollection was that, “In general, what I feel is that instead of emphasizing understanding, more than explaining situations practically, teachers just give the right answer, information, to students; the system stresses what the teacher knows.” Additionally, the fact that all six student participants stated that Korean teachers do not encourage questions and discussion in class is another indication that much of the speaking that takes place is done by the teacher.

Somewhat sarcastically, S4 also said, “They (Korean teachers) lecture and use the textbook. After they lecture, they give assignments and tests. It seems like the teacher’s main job is just to let students know when the test and due dates are.” This illustrates the second most common theme, the use of tests as means of instruction and evaluation. Six participants (S2, S4, S5, S6, KF2, and USF2) raised this point. K2 recalled taking many standardized tests in his classes. “Every month I took a test when I went to high school,” he recalled. “In Korean universities,” said S5, “the truth is that evaluation depends heavily on midterm and final examinations more than ongoing evaluation.” More information on testing in Korean schools is discussed in the assessment section of this study.

One additional common theme was that some Korean teachers use strict methods of discipline and punishment as well as forms of negative reinforcement when instructing students. Six participants (S4, S6, KF2, KF3, KF4, and USF1) shared this perception. At one end of the spectrum, KF3, when recalling his childhood in Korea, said:

The only memory I have of Korean education in elementary school was getting beat (sic) by the teacher. That’s it. Eating lunch, playing soccer and getting beat by the teacher.

But not just me, it was everybody. You know, everybody got punished. That’s it.

A less extreme example of discipline used was given by S4, who stated, “When I attended school in Korea, you were punished if you did something wrong. I also kept hearing ‘Don’t do that; don’t do that.’ If students went in a different direction than the teachers, they say ‘No, don’t do that.’” Another means of maintaining discipline, felt KF4, was for teachers to “set the bar high.” He gave the example of some teachers in one fairly prestigious university who failed students after they had had only two absences in a semester. KF2 believes that even his teaching style in the U.S. is affected by the mentality that teachers should be strict about the behavior of students.

He remarked on his insistence that all his students be punctual and not chew gum, eat snacks, wear hats or put their legs on desks or chairs. He was so adamant about these rules, he recalled with a smile, that some U.S. university students started to “care about my rules too much,” to the point where they felt they had to ask him for permission to go to the bathroom. “They think I am very strict,” he explained, “because when you tell people about strict rules, one after another, they may think that the person is very strict – there’s no freedom.” He felt that his insistence on strict rules of classroom etiquette “came from South Korea.” USF1 offered a slightly different take on this issue:

On the one hand, I have heard stories of the very harsh treatment of teachers, actually hitting children who fell asleep in class or something like that. On the other hand, we were talking about it in one of my classes and someone asked about being able to touch; they were saying that very often teachers will hug children in Korean schools. And so you get the opposite, you know, just very affectionate attitudes and being able to display that in Korean schools where we could not do that in American schools.

***United States.*** There were also two common themes that were evident in the Participants’ responses about common teaching strategies in the U.S.: the use of interactive activities, particularly group projects, and the use of critical thinking exercises that promoted independence in learning and the practical application of knowledge. Many of the strategies discussed seemed to fall into both of these two categories. Less common themes were research and other writing assignments, reading and other homework assignments, exams, and some classroom lectures. Three faculty participants also mentioned that the use of technology in teaching is common.

Twelve of the participants (S1, S2, S3, S6, KF3, KF4, USF1 through USF6) described common teaching strategies in the U.S. as being of an interactive nature. “I believe in engaging the students, and I want an interactive class,” reported USF6. Included in this category were activities that encouraged students to talk to and work with each other, such as group projects, class discussion, oral presentations, and games. In describing her teaching style, USF1 stated:

I try to get the students involved. I try to move around a lot and try to have them do group work when we can and to participate and ask them to either share their homework with the class or something like that. I don't stand up there and lecture.

KF4 explained that he encouraged student discussion in his classes so that an atmosphere of learning will be created wherein all participants in the learning process, the teacher and the students, will learn from each other. Speaking of one technique he uses to encourage students to speak in classes, he said, “If students tend to be quiet in class in general, then I call individual names one by one and then at any time that I call the students' names, I call all of their names, one by one.” When giving an example of one of his typical undergraduate courses, USF4 mentioned making use of discussions and group projects as methods of instruction to help students develop skills they will need after graduation. “I would say group work is good. It's certainly done in business; employees work in teams.” Representing the students' perspective, S4 observed, “There are presentations and there is a lot of communication in the classroom between teachers and students in America,” and S1 remarked, “In the U.S., discussion, expressing your opinion, giving presentations, and talking, is an important part of every class.”

The other common theme, critical thinking methodologies that encourage learners to think for themselves and put learning into a relevant context, was discussed by eight participants (S3, S4, S5 and all U.S. faculty participants). The use of case studies, real-life problem-solving

tasks, community engagement experiences, and learning contracts were activities that were mentioned. When discussing typical classroom activities in his courses, S4 stated

At least in my major, there are a lot of hands-on experiences and time to practice what you are learning. There are also a lot of group projects. Something I especially like are the field trips. These give you an opportunity to go and see realistic situations.

S3 commented, “The most helpful assignments in my masters program (in the U.S.) were those that helped me solve problems or answer questions that I had related to my work as a teacher in Korea.” He added, “In general, the professors here appear to try and put learning into an international or global viewpoint and take into consideration the students’ viewpoint.” Of all the faculty participants, USF3, USF4, and USF5 gave the most specific examples of strategies of this nature they like to utilize in their teaching. In his classes, USF3 facilitated discussions and gave writing assignments that specifically required students to analyze and discuss topics from the viewpoints of their own individual and cultural perspectives. When speaking of how he challenged the international students in his class to apply theory to practice, he related the fact that “...usually in class what I do is say, ‘Don’t think about America and what America does. Think about what’s happening in your country and how you can apply this to what happens in your country.’” He also spoke about how the preliminary exams for master’s degree students in his department include case studies in which students must apply theoretical principles to everyday situations. Using case studies was also mentioned by USF4, as well as requiring that students attend co-curricular activities that will help them realize there is a connection between in-class instruction and the outside world. He explained:

Some of the things we ask them to do, them being undergraduate students, are co-curricular in nature. For instance, I have some personal development activities that I ask

students to do – to go to a university speaker series, and a play and a concert or a gallery opening, to attend a student organization meeting, to go to a game.

USF4 also described a large group project in one of his classes that asked students to “. . . organize a dinner at an international restaurant for which the class was going to receive a grant from First Year Programs to help defray the cost of dinner, and they were going to learn about culture.” An example of a community engagement project came from USF5. “We try to do some community engagement. We’ve actually had clients for the Research Methods class. So we did a readership survey for the (student newspaper at the university) a few semesters ago.” Related to the development of critical thinking skills, USF2 stated, “I’d like them to not be mindless. I’d like them to, you know, ask real questions and consider real answers.”

***Divergent themes.*** Regarding comments made about teaching strategies common in Korea, S5, KF2, and KF4 all made the point that the instructional styles of some younger teachers in Korea are more interactive than those used by their older colleagues. “Younger teachers who’ve studied abroad and come back to teach use newer teaching methodologies,” said S5. When speaking of Korean universities, KF4 stated

One thing I know almost for sure is that the teaching pedagogy is changing. Now, the professors are using more group work than the traditional lecture. Even though the class is still lecture-style, the professors tend to give more group work to students to study together.

Regarding changes in the teaching styles of Korean teachers, KF4 also brought up the impact that the Internet has had. When speaking specifically of Korean teachers who’d obtained degrees in the United States, he explained:

In the past we would not know whether the professor is using his teacher's lecture notes from the States and claimed, 'This is what I have developed.' And now they cannot; I don't think they'll be able to do that. So therefore, the availability of the information (on the Internet) to any students – that has played a role in any professor's teaching style or teaching or preparing the lectures.

In regards to the U.S., four participants (S2, USF1, USF1, and USF4) indicated their belief that some lecturing takes place in U.S. university classrooms. In fact, S2 remarked that in some of his classes, he can't tell a big difference in the teaching styles between U.S. and Korean professors. USF4 gave the example of using PowerPoint presentations when he lectures. A remark by KF3 also brought to light the fact that some teachers in the U.S. might still rely on other less interactive styles of instruction. He explained:

I tried to be interactive – getting students to engage in the material and stuff. Then I discovered that didn't work very well because they don't draw the right conclusions from what I assigned them. They, you know, if this is what I tell them – A, B – then it's natural and logically it should lead to C. But from A and B they draw X, Y, Z, you know, things that are totally irrelevant. So I've modified my teaching quite a bit so that I take them along to C rather than having them get there on their own.

***Comparison of responses.*** Looking at the student participant responses, it appeared that they were for the most part critical of many of the traditional teaching styles in Korea and more positive of the teaching strategies they had encountered in the U.S.; however, not all student comments about common teaching methodologies in the U.S. were positive. In some cases, students expressed frustration with the lack of “direct instruction and explanation” (S5) given by

their teachers. In addition, none of the graduate students spoke of the strict discipline and punishment used by Korean teachers; only two undergraduates mentioned this.

It was also interesting to note that none of the Korean faculty participants and only half of the Korean student participants, when speaking about teaching strategies in the U.S., mentioned the critical thinking aspect of these strategies, and only one Korean faculty participant spoke of the interactive nature of these strategies. In addition, KF1 and KF2 were more detailed in their analysis of Korean teaching methodologies than was KF3, who had only attended primary school in Korea before immigrating to the U.S.

**Common Learning Strategies.** Another major theme that arose from a review of the participants' responses was learning strategies that are used by Korean students and U.S. students. All participants were asked to specifically to identify these strategies as well as comment on what skills were needed for students to be academically successful in both countries. While it may be the case that common learning strategies observed do not necessarily lead to academic success, the participants' comments seemed to overwhelmingly imply that the strategies they mentioned are those used by "successful" students.

**Korea.** When asked about learning strategies that were evident in Korea, the participants identified five common themes: listening carefully and absorbing what teachers said, taking tests, memorizing facts, studying intensely for long periods of time, and taking notes. Other comments made were related to the importance of preparing for class, reviewing material, reading a lot, managing time, and relying on older classmates for help.

Seven participants (S1 through S4, USF1, USF3, and USF5) expressed the opinion that the ability to listen carefully and understand what teachers were saying was not only commonly stressed in Korea but also considered important in terms of academic success. Since all but one

of the participants who mentioned this also stated that a lecture style of instruction was common in Korean classrooms, it should not be surprising that paying attention to and comprehending those lectures was mentioned. The ability to concentrate in class was stated as being an important part of this strategy. When asked what skills and study habits a Korean student needs to be successful in that country, S4 said, “When I look at my friends who are good students, the way they concentrate during the class is different than the average student. Their ability to concentrate is deeper.” Asked his impressions of learning skills students in Korea might need to be successful, USF5 responded, “I would say that they need to be excellent listeners. They would be able to take notes and be able to provide a clear indication to the professor or to the teacher that they have absorbed the material.”

One method of demonstrating understanding in Korea was identified as the ability to take tests. Since test-taking was also identified as a common occurrence in the Korean education system, it was not unexpected that the ability to take those exams was stated as being of importance by seven participants (S2, S3, S5, KF1, KF2, KF3, and USF5). S1 remarked, “In Korea, even if you have done well the whole class, if you don’t do well on one test, the result isn’t good.” When asked about the best way for students to be successful in Korea, KF1 succinctly responded, “The best way is to get good scores from the test exams.” Part of the ability to do well on these tests depends on how well students prepare, said several of the participants.

When asked her opinion of typical ways that students in Korea learn, UFS1 observed, “I get the impression that there is more just memorization . . . as far as learning techniques, just a lot of repetition and rote memorization.” This impression was shared by a total of six participants (S1, S5, S6, KF3, USF1, and USF2). The three students who made this comment all

stated that the ability to memorize was an essential element of being successful in Korean schools. For S5, repetition when studying assists with this process. She explained, “When I read I try to concentrate on what I read. Also, when I don’t understand, I repeat the reading from the beginning until I understand. I take it step by step until I understand it.” According to S6, this emphasis on memorizing facts was one of the reasons that made studying in Korea “more of an automatic process” for her.

In Korea, I studied hard, but there wasn’t much time to think about why I was studying. Studying was just something I was taught to do since elementary school . . . Honestly, I didn’t really want to do it, and I wasn’t sure about the reason I was studying – if it was something I wanted to do or if I was just being pushed by others.

USF2 expressed the opinion that memorization isn’t necessarily bad. In speaking of his sense of the Korean education system, he said, “My impressions are that it relies to a certain extent on a lot of memory, memory work, but I think that’s okay because I think that American students tend to be really weak on fundamentals.”

Another common theme was brought up by S3. When asked what it took to be a successful student in Korea, he immediately remarked with a laugh, “First of all, sitting for a long time at your desk because the amount of time students have to spend studying from the time they are high school students is a lot.” The fact that students in Korea are encouraged to study for long periods of time was brought up by seven participants (S2, S3, S5, S6, KF1, KF3, and KF4). S5 stated the belief that the experience of having to sit in class and focus on learning for many hours each week has helped her develop patience and made her a better student. Half of the students stated that one of their strengths as students was endurance or stamina, and two

students felt that being used to extended periods of intense study gives Korean students an advantage over some U.S. students. S3 explained:

The typical American students haven't experienced, what should I call it, the intense, strict teaching and learning style that most Korean students have been exposed to – all the long hours of sitting at the desk and studying by yourself without being able to express yourself.

All of the Korean faculty members who commented on this theme felt that the emphasis on “after school” lessons in private institutes or with tutors is one reason that students are exposed to what KF3 described as “fifteen-hour days” of concentrated learning. When he was a student in Korea, KF1 mentioned, “I went to school at like 7:00 or 7:30 in the morning and came back home sometimes around 9:00 p.m., sometimes almost midnight.” KF4 believed that this trend has not changed and, in the case of university students, had even intensified recently because of the increasing competitiveness for jobs after graduation.

***United States.*** The three most common themes that appeared in the case of learning strategies commonly found in the U.S. were using critical thinking skills and applying learning, expressing oneself verbally, and working well with others. Additional academic strategies identified as being important were reading, writing, memorization (“Even Americans have to memorize,” said S1), listening, and preparing for class. Some also mentioned that being able to adapt to a variety of learning and teaching styles in the classroom was important.

“To be a successful student in the United States you have to think deeply,” said S5. Following on this theme, S1 felt that in the U.S., “You need to have critical thinking skills . . . and apply learning to different situations.” These comments are indicative of the belief on the part of eight participants (S1, S4, S5, KF1, KF3, USF2, USF3, and USF5) that critical thinking

and the ability to put learning into a practical, relevant context were learning strategies used in the U.S. The faculty members who spoke of this theme illustrated the fact that some teachers in the U.S. both encourage and expect that students do more than just “learn the facts.” When asked what skills students needed to be successful in his class, KF3 stated:

No matter what kind of tools you have, like all those fancy computer programs, the ultimate essence of learning is between the student and the author that you’re reading or the problem. No matter what you put into it, a student has to sit down in solitude and work through that problem or that text. You have to, the student has to struggle with it.

Part of the critical thinking skills mentioned was also the ability to analyze and critique an argument. “Always think about the other side of ideas,” KF1 recommended to his students. “Like a bowl. It’s not just looking at the one side.”

Six participants (S1, S3, S6, USF3, USF5, and USF6) stated that a common strategy used in learning in the United States was oral communication. Most of the examples given of this form of communication were related to speaking in class (e.g. taking part in discussions, giving presentations, asking questions). The ability to express one’s opinion without merely mimicking others words was also mentioned as part of this. “Everyone (in U.S. universities) has to explain their way of thinking and explain it in their own words,” said S1. S3 added:

American students do a good job of responding and speaking out in class. I think they speak what they are thinking out loud in class in order to know if they are right. They think it is an advantage to express what they know so that others can give them feedback about whether they’re on the right track. In other words, speaking out in class is very important.

The three faculty members who mentioned speaking as being a common learning strategy in the U.S. all stated that speaking in class is mandatory in their classes and that students who do not participate orally might have difficulty passing. “I structure the class that will in a way eventually require them to speak in order to gain the points that I know they want,” explained USF5.

The final common theme that emerged in this area was the ability to cooperate with others, particularly when working in groups. Six participants (S4, KF1, KF4, USF2, USF4, and USF6) spoke of this common learning strategy. Since group work was described as a common teaching strategy, it should not be surprising that developing skills in working with others was suggested as a common learning strategy. The group work described included both in-class and out-of-class cooperative efforts. USF6 even mentioned that some group work in her classes involved partnering up the in-class students with the distance education students who are taking the same class so they have to interact in “cyberspace.” She explained:

That’s how they do their group project. I set up groups on Blackboard so each group has their own email, their own discussion board, their own drop box for depositing their part of the group project. And then those are presented in the classroom the last night of class.

In addition, being able to rely on and work with other classmates outside the class was mentioned as being important in the U.S. Comparing collaboration between Korean and U.S. students at the higher education level, S4 said:

Korean students, if they are very close, help each other study for tests, but it’s not easy to borrow notes from each other and so on. Korean students don’t work together in the way that American students depend on each other.

S4 also said that, in U.S. schools, “Working with others is better than figuring things out by yourself,” and recommended to other Korean university students in the U.S. to get to know and ask for help from their American classmates.

***Comparison of responses.*** In general, more common themes emerged about learning styles in Korea than learning strategies used in the U.S. There seemed to be less consensus about this topic when speaking of the U.S. Of interest in the responses about learning strategies in Korea is that a fairly equal number of both student and faculty participants commented on each of the common themes; it is notable, however, that none of the U.S. faculty participants mentioned studying for extended periods of time as a common learning strategy.

When responding to questions about learning strategies used in the U.S., all of the common themes were also commented on by both students and faculty. However, more students identified oral participation and none of the Korean faculty participants brought this up. In contrast, more faculty members spoke of critical thinking skills, and only one student mentioned the importance of working with others.

***Divergent themes.*** Although working with others was not a common theme identified in Korea, comments by KF2 suggested that, in some aspects, Korean university students did rely on and support each other, especially when he was a college student in Korea. He spoke of the use of study groups and the “*sam-bae/who-bae*” system in Korea, in which older students act as a type of “mentors” or “guides” for younger students, and younger students are taught to “look up to” and rely on older students. He gave the example of an older student who spent much time with him outside of class to help him with his English pronunciation. Because it was often difficult to get guidance from teachers, he stated, “. . . we need to find somebody close to us. So for me, I chose my seniors and juniors.” KF4 also stated the belief that collaboration between

classmates was more common in the past than it is these days due to the highly competitive nature of looking for post-graduation employment.

**Forms of assessment.** Several participants spoke of different forms of assessment used in both countries. For the purposes of this study, “assessment” was defined as both formal and informal forms of student evaluation. Some of these comments were made when participants were specifically asked about feedback teachers gave students; other observations were made when participants were speaking of the education systems in general and common teaching and learning strategies.

**Korea.** Only one common theme was identified in this area: the perception that students’ grades in Korea were based on large, standardized examinations. Other comments related to this area were that grades were often affected by pre-determined percentile distribution scales and that teachers were not always objective when giving grades.

Nine participants (S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, KF1, KF2, and USF2) stated the perception that the primary method by which students’ classroom performance in Korea was assessed was by one or two comprehensive, high stakes standardized tests. Most suggested that these tests were given in the middle and at the end of the academic semester. S6 put it succinctly when she said, “In Korea you are evaluated mostly on your midterm and final exams. Your whole grade depends on that.” She went on to say, “All you need to do is do well on those tests; all you need to do is study hard during those times.” S5 echoed this sentiment. “In Korean universities, the truth is that evaluation depends heavily on midterm and final examinations more than ongoing (formative) evaluation.” S3 commented that, outside of informing students of their grades on these tests, many Korean teachers don’t provide much feedback to students on their learning. “There’s a joke in Korea about how teachers just throw the students’ papers and tests back at

them without comment,” he said. “They don’t give students enough feedback. They just give you a grade.” KF1 and KF2 implied that this trend to base student assessment on this form of testing might be reflected in the education systems use of large standardized tests to determine admission to higher levels of schooling (e.g. the college entrance examination).

A less common theme worth noting was raised by KF4. He explained:

Some universities have implemented certain rules so that no more than a certain percentage in any given class can be given an ‘A.’ So in other words, grade distribution is pre-made and students have to be placed into that distribution . . . the number of students who will get an ‘A’ from that class will be limited by the pre-arranged distribution – no more than 20% can get an ‘A,’ no more than 40% can get a ‘B,’ or something like that.

The tendency of teachers to rely on pre-determined percentile distribution scales when determining students’ grades was also mentioned by S3.

***United States.*** The one common theme identified about assessment in the U.S. was the fact that student performance is based on a number of ongoing activities and factors; that test scores were not always the most important means of evaluation. Less reliance on grade distribution scales and the use of non-standardized forms of testing and informal feedback were less common themes.

In speaking of differences between assessment in Korea and assessment in the U.S., S5 said, “Even in America they have this type of test (high stake exams), but there are also classes where there is no test; instead students are evaluated throughout the course of the class.” S6 agreed. “Here, what you do throughout the class – projects, homework, participation – is important. It’s a more complete evaluation.” This tendency to use more than just test grades to

assess students' performance was identified by all the student participants and one of the faculty participants (USF2). S1 explained:

When I first came here, something I was surprised about the fact that you can get a good grade in a class even if you don't do well on the final test because teachers consider everything you've done in class. In America, the result is important, but the way you get that result (the process) is also important . . . Here, even if you don't do well on a test all your work in the classroom is considered as part of the grade.

This fact, said S2, affected the students' attitude towards both classes and tests:

In the case of America, students aren't as nervous on the day of the test because their grade depends on several things, not just one test. They have extra credit here, and they can take quizzes to make up for tests they didn't do well on.

In the opinion of S6, less emphasis on test scores also changes the perception students have about letter grades. "Just getting a good grade here doesn't mean you are a good student," she said.

A less common theme which emerged was the fact that some teachers do not rely on pre-determined distribution scales when giving student grades. USF5, when explaining his philosophy about this as well as his feelings about the importance of letter grades as a means of assessing performance, said:

My old first day lecture is: 'you are not your grades. I do not equate you with your grade. Your grade is the product of whatever you've done, but it is not you. And we're both on same side; this is not an adversarial relationship. I want you to succeed. The best thing could happen is that you'll all walk out of here with As. Is that statistically probable? No.

Is it possible? Yes. And to me, that would not be grade inflation; that would be academic success.

One final observation was that a variety of non-standardized forms of testing and evaluation were used in U.S. universities. These included peer review, self-evaluation, and different test formats such as essay, short answer, case study analysis, and multiple-choice.

***Comparison of responses.*** Clearly obvious in an analysis of the responses is the fact that the high majority of comments about assessment in both Korea and the U.S. were made by the student participants. Whether this is the case because assessment is perceived as more important to the students or because the nature of the questions asked during the interviews elicited more responses about this issue from the students than from the faculty is uncertain.

***Divergent responses.*** Another observation of note related to assessment was the fact that three of the U.S. faculty participants mentioned that several of the Korean students they had taught had come to their offices after class and attempted to negotiate for grades. This might be seen as a confirmation of the perceived importance of grades in the Korean education system; however, it might also be a factor related to the perception of relationships between teachers and students in the U.S. or another factor.

Although several student participants noted the use of non-standardized forms of testing in the U.S., two faculty participants (KF2 and USF1) spoke of a recent trend towards the use of standardized forms of outcome assessment in the U.S. KF2 spoke of testing required by the “No Child Left Behind” initiative has having a real impact on schools and students, particularly on those with special needs. While these comments were not specifically targeted at assessment in higher education, there was an implication that this tendency might have an impact on education in the U.S. in general and therefore could influence teaching and learning at the university level.

**Influences on education.** In addition to examining participants' perceptions of the education systems and their participants in Korea and the United States, Research Question One and Two were also aimed at determining how both these systems and practices are influenced by culture. In order to shed light on these influences, all participants were asked to describe what they felt were cultural, historical, political, social or other influences on the education systems and teaching and learning. All Korean participants (both students and faculty) were asked this question about both Korea and the U.S.; since it was assumed that U.S. faculty participants might not be as aware of the influences on education in Korea, they were only asked to comment on influences on U.S. education.

*Korea.* The Korean student and faculty participants stated that the two largest influences on education in Korea were political and economic. Other influences remarked on were social (e.g. the social importance placed on education, family values, customs), and historical (e.g. Confucianism, the Korean War). It was also mentioned that developments in technology and U.S. education also played a role in shaping teaching and learning in Korea.

All of the Korean participants but one stated that politics and politicians in Korea have an impact on schools, teachers and students, and educational practices in that country. Some were very adamant in stating their contention that the Korean education system is to a large degree shaped by and must be responsive to the wants and needs of politicians. When asked to come up with influences on Korean education, S3 promptly stated, "I think political influences are the strongest." Aspects of education that participants listed as being affected by politics were the public education curriculum, the college entrance examination system, the system of private institutes, the emphasis on learning English, the hiring and promotion of teachers, and the teaching methodologies. One participant observed that students' interest and involvement in

political issues affects learning that takes place in the classroom. Four of the participants stated that, in the words of S4, “Whenever the political power changes, like congressmen or the president, the education system changes.” “They use education for their own benefits,” he continued. “It keeps changing over and over.” S2 strongly concurred:

In my personal opinion, there is a lot of political influence. Whenever there is a change in the political party, they change the education system. When there is a political campaign, they make all kinds of promises and then try to make changes after they are elected. There is no consistency. They don’t think about education itself – they just use it as a political tool.

In speaking of how politics might play a role in supporting the private institutes that are so popular in Korea, S5 said

If you think about it, it’s hard to say that politics doesn’t influence education in Korea, especially with private education. I can’t say it’s totally political, but I don’t understand why politicians can’t solve the problem of private education. There must be a connection between private schools and politicians.

From the perspective of a faculty member, KF2 was concerned about how government policies impact teachers, the curriculum and classroom learning. “I think there’s a kind of pressure from government policy,” he stated, “so it really affects pure subject matter like literature, Korean literature, history, and everything.”

Economic influences were mentioned by six participants (S1, S6, KF1, KF2, KF3, and KF4). These influences were reported to have an impact on the availability of education to certain members of society, the administration of schools, the curriculum, the teachers’ responsibilities, and the students’ priorities and behavior. KF4 spoke at length about how the

corporate world affects both what takes place in university classrooms and how educational institutions view their role in society. In speaking of how professors are changing their teaching methodologies to better align themselves with the needs of businesses, he reported

Teachers tend to give more group work to students to study together because that's what the employers in Korea are asking from the universities. We want the candidates who can be well accepted by other groups or will be able to work with others. Basically, that's what the corporate life is like.

When asked if universities are responding to the needs of business, he replied, "Yes, universities have to listen to the corporations because basically, the roles from the university administrators' perspective is to educate students to get a job." Both KF4 and S6 stated that the desire by Korean companies to hire employees with English speaking skills forces schools to focus on training students with these skills. "The Korean education system stresses English education. This is because of social influences. In our society, it's easier to get a job with good English skills, so the education system emphasizes learning English more than ever before." One additional remark about the economics and education, made by KF2, was that

Universities thinking about kind of a business (sic), they have a business idea. For example, something tangible . . . some departments can get money from outside, like grant funding . . . then the supporting departments, like the literature area, they cannot get much money than other departments, and they try to decrease the number of departments or integrate them together.

Finally, KF3 expressed the opinion that economic status plays a role in who benefits from the education system in Korea:

Class mobility is much more structured and made difficult by the way things are arranged in Korea. It's a reproduction of class that you find throughout the university system.

Those who are poor, lower classes probably would find it very difficult to get into universities in the first place . . .

Four faculty participants (KF1, KF3, KF4, and USF6) spoke of the pressures put on students by society and parents in particular to obtain a high level education. KF1 remarked, "In Korea, you know, the parents actually have really high expectations for their children, so from elementary school, middle school, and high school . . . young kids learn how to compete with each other, against other students." Commenting on Korean students she'd had in her classes, she remarked, "I think that they have very good family relationships . . . as far as how they study I think they don't want to disappoint their families." On the importance of having a college degree, KF3 elaborated:

If you're a college graduate, that accords a certain amount of prestige in Korea. If you're meeting with a girl, like a *san* (arranged date) or whatever, that's one of the first questions they (dates) ask you – is if you've graduated from college, and if you haven't it's like you're a second or third class citizen.

A different aspect of this social pressure was brought up by KF4 who, when comparing Korean and American university students, mentioned the fact that U.S. students seem to show much more pride in their schools and the fact that they going to college than do most Korean students. He attributed this to the fact that getting a college education in Korea is pretty much expected. "In Korea," he said, "almost everyone is going to college, so it's not news. 'Yeah, you're going to college – of course, you should!'"

Historical influences that were identified had implications on teacher/student relationships, classroom behavior, teaching and learning practices, the administrative structure of schools, and attitudes about education. KF1 went into depth about how the devastation of Korean War as well as the struggles against the Chinese and Japanese impacted older generations of Koreans and motivated them to push their children to succeed both academically and economically. “They said I don’t want to inherit this kind of tragedy to my next generations, so a lot of the really important part of their philosophy is to make their children successful.” KF4 spoke of the influence of Confucianism on Korean education, particularly on the way teachers are viewed by society. “Korea’s belief or the norm is mainly based on the Confucian belief, and I don’t think that has changed,” he said. The Confucian notion of respect for age still impacts the way that students deal with teachers, said KF2, as well as encourages younger students to look up to and listen carefully to their “seniors” (upperclassmen). Perhaps another manifestation of the “deference to your elders” concept, felt another faculty member, was some students’ hesitancy to speak in classes when older students are present.

***United States.*** While political influences were also seen as having an impact on education in the U.S., more comments were made about the fact that economics was a powerful force shaping American schools. In addition, the media, social views about teachers, students’ social backgrounds, and the diversity of U.S. society were suggested as having influences on the U.S. education system and its participants. It was also noted that influences on schools are often interrelated. “It’s hard to disentwine them all,” said USF1.

Five faculty participants (KF1, KF3, KF4, USF1, and USF2) spoke of how economics and businesses affect what goes on in institutions of higher education in the U.S. Several spoke of an increasing emphasis on increased enrollment and retention and the generation of external

funding as having an impact on what goes on U.S. universities. Also mentioned was the perception that the role of schools in U.S. society was becoming more focused on “job training” as opposed to the provision of a “well-rounded” education for students. Other side effects related to economic conditions were an increase in tuition, the acceptance of “less qualified” students, the loss of student services at the university level, and the pressure students feel to get jobs while still fulltime students. In the words of KF3:

I think the U.S. education system is driven largely by the economic system. It’s much more capitalistic in the sense that even at the department level faculty members are just hammered to generate external funding, even when those external fundings have very little to do with your own research agenda or questions of your discipline.

He went on to say, “You can’t let a discipline’s focus be dictated by federal funding because that contradicts all the premises of higher education, which is the pursuit of truth, not the pursuit of funding.” Speaking of how some departments like Philosophy are often cut by school administrators because those programs have difficulty “generating funds,” KF3 pondered, “You know, I don’t know how you have a university without a Philosophy program.” UFS2 agreed that the emphasis on “money, money, money” by university administrators has a large impact on the role of the professor, the curriculum, and classroom learning and added that he believed this focus contributed to schools “absolutely bogging down in bureaucracy.” The perception that society in general and students in particular primarily view universities as a means of getting better jobs was commented on by three of the participants. KF1 was one of these participants. He stated

Academia is the place to seek and find truth, for everybody, regardless of their major, Science, Engineering or Liberal Arts, it is important for us to know the true identity of a

college education. But I have received a certain perception from my undergraduate, masters, and Ph.D. programs. A lot of undergraduate students especially are very busy to find a job. That is really important; I agree with that. But . . . it is also important to have a certain balance of ideas and thought. Do you understand me? Rather than just following business-minded or oriented ideas and thoughts, it is important for students to have more balance while they are studying their majors.

This functionalist view of the role of education was also expressed by KF4, who expressed the view that

America is kind of still known or recognized as “the land of dreams,” and one way to achieve the dream is to get a good education so that will result in a good job . . .

Therefore, I think education can be a good ladder to climb up to the different level of society.

One additional side effect of the struggle of educational institutions to remain financially viable, pointed out USF1, was the rising cost of attending colleges. According to her, this has forced more students to get jobs while they are students, which in turn impacts the ability of students to get the most out of their academic experience.

It just robs them of the time to really assimilate what they’ve learned, rushing here and there and not doing as well as they could, and as a professor you have to kind of resist the temptation to let them off easier because they’re working so hard and they have a family and a car payment and rent and all that.

In addition to economic influences, four participants (S1, KF2, USF1 and USF2) mentioned the influence that politics has on U.S. schools. USF2 spoke passionately about his

concern that politics at the national and local levels have a negative impact on the culture of learning at the university.

I just weep for the future of this country because people can get so emotional about anything. I mean, no matter what your politics are. When people go on national television and say that Sarah Palin is the standard bearer for some segment of the Republican Party, and I think, 'No, she's not!' She's somebody who says 'I'm experienced in international affairs because on a clear day I can see across the Bering Strait.' I mean, I don't care what your politics are – that was a stupid thing to say . . . I think this kind of attitude, this emotionalism, as opposed to reason affects the university because we exist in this whole context.

He went on to express the opinion that

This is the culture that starts in Washington, D.C. and moves right on down. I think this is the culture we exist in – it's run absolutely by money and by ideology and the ideologues prey on emotionalism. And if you, if anybody tries to be, you know, for lack of a better word, intellectual in their approach to something they're not only laughed at, they are ridiculed and excoriated and people just don't trust it.

In addition to this feeling that politics promotes emotionalism as opposed to reason, USF1 mentioned the federal and state governments' "push for accountability" in the form of output assessment as having an effect what goes on in the classroom and the perception of the role of university faculty.

It's understandable that they want to see some numbers, that their dollars are making numbers go up or down or whatever, but it's very hard when you're dealing with people and with ideas and, as I say, it's not just about people being able to spout things back to

you . . . that's hard very hard to get across to a legislator or to students who think that all we do is teach and that we should be in the classroom more, that we have a cushy job because we're only in the classroom nine hours a week and not understanding that if your professors are not doing research and keeping up with the field, then after 30 years of teaching, they're still teaching you what they learned 30 years ago.

Speaking of federally-mandated outcome assessment programs such as the Bush administration's "No Child Left Behind", KF2 also pointed out that, while in his mind the intentions of this initiative were worthwhile, its implementation had negative consequences, particularly on children with disabilities, who were held to the same standards as children without disabilities. "I think that policy cannot satisfy all the people, but it should be careful, policy makers, because it can affect many educators and students." KF2 also gave examples of how the federal government supports education in what he considers positive ways, such as the provision of financial aid for lower income students and the funding of programs such as Head Start. As a faculty member in Education, he also stated his hope that the election of President Barack Obama would lead to more government support for his field. The lone student who commented on influences on U.S. education was S1, who suggested that international politics also plays a role in the development of the U.S. education system. She explained:

For example according to history books, the launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union impacted American education. When the Russians launched Sputnik, it was shocking for the Americans, and there were changes in the education system here because of this (to catch up with the Russians in space technology).

***Comparison of responses.*** The students' lack of response to influences on U.S. education was very noticeable. While all students mentioned influences in Korea, particularly

those related to politics, only one could name influences in the U.S. even though all were specifically asked to identify these influences. While most of the students stated their belief that U.S. education was affected by culture, society, and politics (in the words of S1, “Society and education move together; they cannot ignore each other”), most students admitted to not being aware of what those influences were. When asked if she was aware of influences on education in the U.S., S6 replied, “Not really because I’m just busy concentrating on my studies.” One student, S2, felt that politics had no influence on U.S. education and another, S3, stated that it was “hard to see” that influence. It was also noticeable that most of the student participants’ comments related to influences in Korea focused on political influences and less on economic influences. Both Korean and U.S. faculty participants had more to say about economic and other influences. The most vocal on influences in both countries were the Korean faculty.

While politics and economics were listed as the two most powerful influences on both countries’ education systems, it appeared that politics was felt to have the strongest impact in Korea and economics the strongest impact in the U.S. Since participants were not asked to list influences in order of degree of influence, however, it is difficult to determine with certainty that this was believed to be the case.

### **Cultural Differences that Impact Korean Students’ Performance**

Research Question Three looked at how cultural differences between Korea and the United States impacted the attitude and behavior of Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education and how students and faculty perceived those differences. While responses from the *Impressions of Korean and U.S. Education Systems and Their Participants* section can contribute to the answering of this question, a series of further questions aimed at investigating this issue provided more insight. All participants were asked to specifically identify differences between

education systems, behavior, learning and teaching strategies, and culture in Korea and in the U.S. In addition, students were asked a series of questions on the differences in their approaches to learning in Korea as opposed to the approaches they use in the U.S. U.S. faculty participants were also asked to make observations about the classroom behavior and learning strategies employed by Korean students they had in their classes. Furthermore, all participants were asked to make observations about the difficulties encountered by Koreans in U.S. universities as well as the overall strengths of those students. Common themes that emerged from the responses fell under the categories of differences in education and culture, challenges faced by Korean students in the U.S., and the strengths of Korean students.

**Differences in education and culture.** In an attempt to ascertain specific differences in educational practices and culture between the U.S. and Korea, both student and faculty participants were asked to name those differences. U.S. faculty participants were also asked to comment on the classroom behavior and learning strategies of Korean students they had in classes. In addition, students were asked a series of questions aimed at capturing their perceptions about their approach to learning in Korea as opposed to their approach to learning in the U.S. Responses to these questions and others elicited the perceptions that major differences existed in classroom behavior, student/teacher relationships, and common teaching and learning strategies. The most common specific differences mentioned were related the level of oral participation in the classroom, the degree of communication between teachers and students, teaching strategies used by faculty, and learning strategies used by students. Observations of the classroom behavior and learning strategies of Korean students by U.S. faculty provided further evidence of several of the above differences. It was interesting to note that the majority of students appeared to feel that, despite these differences, they did not need to change their

approach to learning in the U.S. and that the way they study in the U.S. would also be applicable to studying in Korea. On the flip side, however, the majority felt that the typical U.S. student would not be successful in Korea.

***Differences in classroom behavior.*** The difference in the level of oral participation in class was identified as the first major difference between studying in the U.S. and studying in Korea. All but three of the participants (KF2, KF3, and KF4) shared the belief that, in general, it was less common for Korean students to speak during class than it was for American students to speak in class. In this case, speaking was defined as taking part in class or group discussions and asking questions. The opinion of S2 seemed to represent a consensus of thought. When asked what the biggest difference between Korean and U.S. university students, he said

I think there are a lot of differences. In our country students don't usually ask questions. And I haven't seen many cases where students could say what they wanted during class. But here, students usually say what they want to say in class.

USF6 shared this impression.

I think one of the biggest things that's hard for them (Korean students in the U.S.) in their first few classes is the interaction in the classroom because they're not accustomed to that. They're accustomed to a professor just lecturing, and students don't ask questions.

S5 felt that having to use English was a big reason Korean students don't speak out as much in U.S. classrooms.

Because they (Korean students) don't have confidence about speaking, they try to make a grammatically correct sentence in their minds before speaking. Looking at American students, first of all they can speak naturally and freely; they don't have to think first.

They can think while they're speaking. If we don't prepare well or don't have confidence to speak, it's hard for us to say something.

USF3 was another faculty member who commented that many of the Korean students he'd had in his classes did not participate actively in the classroom. While noting that this behavior may have as much to do with language as with cultural differences, he observed that

They have a tendency to sit towards the back; they have a tendency not to speak unless spoken to. Now if I call on them, they'll try to answer the questions, but again if they don't have their books there to open up and get the language for them, it's difficult . . .

(speaking) frightens them because they're not good at it or they're afraid they're going to say something that will upset someone or embarrass someone.

USF4 added, "They (Korean students) are somewhat reticent in class . . . and I don't know whether it's a cultural issue we're dealing with; well, maybe they're not supposed to speak out."

Due to this lack of verbal interaction on the part of some Korean students, USF4 and USF5 also commented on the difficulty they sometimes had in gauging the students' level of comprehension of what was going on in class. When speaking of Korean students in his classes, USF5 related, "My experience has been that they will indicate that they understand non-verbally and will make eye contact and shake their heads and smile and will be very, very pleasant – and be totally lost."

***Differences in student/teacher relationships.*** All participants made some mention of having the perception that the relationship between students and teachers in Korean universities is different than the relationship between students and teachers in U.S. universities. Those participants who brought up this difference stated the belief that, in general, there is more communication between teachers and students in the U.S. than between teachers and students in

Korea. The consensus was that student/teacher relationships are more “formal” than they are in the U.S. and that cultural, historical and social perceptions of the role of teachers play a big part in shaping these relationships. S3 summed up his feelings about the different ways teachers are perceived in both countries and how that affects the way he feels about learning:

In Korea when students are assigned a project or given an assignment, we expect teachers to know everything about the subject matter, like an expert or a wise person. Because of that, if I have a project I’m working on I really worry if everything is correct or not the way the teacher would expect it to be. But here in America, first of all, it is an expectation that some teachers know a lot about the subject matter, and some teachers don’t, or there are some things about the subject matter that teachers don’t know.

Several of the U.S. faculty members felt that differences in the relationships between students and teachers in both countries was one reason Korean students in the U.S. are often hesitant to approach professors after class to ask for help. USF5 summarized this feeling when he said, “It’s much more difficult for them to come (and ask for help) and if they do they are very deferent and worried taking my time or somehow being inappropriate, so I have to be very careful.” USF3’s experience was that

They (Korean students) also talk about that they aren’t expected in their country to spend time speaking with the professor unless there is a problem, and the American students will come in and chit-chat about whatever. And when they come in for advisement they don’t say a whole lot – they just kind of nod their heads, and I always try to get information out of them just to get them to talk.

Three U.S. faculty members also mentioned that Korean students are less hesitant to come speak with them after class if they wanted to negotiate for grades. “They *will* come in if they’re not

getting good grades,” USF3 continued. “They’re very concerned about their grades, more so than American students.”

***Differences in teaching strategies.*** Another main theme identified was a difference in teaching pedagogies between instructors in both countries. All participants expressed the opinion that, generally speaking, a lecture style of instruction was more common in Korean universities and interactive methodologies were more common in U.S. universities. Although exceptions in both these cases were noted, it was felt that in Korea, many professors spent class time transmitting knowledge to students while in the U.S., many professors tended to use collaborative means of promoting learning. S1 summarized these differences when she said that in Korea, “Teachers generally speak and students listen; a lecture style of teaching is common.” In the U.S., on the other hand, “discussion is an important part of every class . . . there are explanations (by the teachers) and discussions about the content of tests . . . students express their opinions and say what they like and don’t like.” When asked to describe his teaching style in the U.S., KF4 stated, “Not just lecture. I try to bring cases and group work into class so students will have time or opportunity to work among themselves to learn.” In Korea, he said, many of the professors he had at the university preferred to lecture. “We didn’t have much group study at that time,” he recalled.

***Differences in learning strategies.*** When speaking of learning strategies used by students in Korea compared with learning strategies used by students in the U.S., most participants felt that teacher-dependent strategies were more common in Korea whereas self-directed strategies were more common in the U.S. In the words of S5

Korean students are good at doing something they are told but . . . in America students have to do everything for themselves. . . The biggest difference is autonomy or

independence. Korean students are not used to doing things by themselves. . . American students develop the ability to be independent in their learning because the American education system, starting in elementary school, encourages this. It comes natural to them because that's the way they are used to learning. . . To be successful here students should be self-directed.

S3 expressed a similar view.

A big difference between the American and Korean systems is that in America, independent learning is encouraged more. Even though the teaching style is often the same, even though teachers demonstrate and present material in a similar way, students (in the U.S.) are expected to apply what they are learning and take it to the next level or think of examples by themselves.

Examples given of teacher-dependent strategies felt to be common in Korea were comprehending class lectures, recalling information, and demonstrating an understanding of the material on examinations. Self-directed learning strategies described were conducting independent or group research and communicating ones' own ideas about class material in either written or oral projects. All student participants, three of the Korean faculty participants, and five of the U.S. faculty participants gave at least one example of these two types of strategies. Related to these differences in approach to learning, USF2 made the following observation about some of the Korean students he'd taught:

I don't really don't know how much thinking for themselves or analysis is encouraged, but I know among my strongest students . . . they're excellent students because they'll ask me, as if I know anything, 'What should I do about this?' And I'll say, 'Why don't

you try this and this and this,' and they'll do it! . . . They've got this notion that somehow the teacher knows, and you should pay attention to them.

USF3 even felt that this reliance on teachers might have made some of his Korean students a little reluctant to trust the word of other students. Although acknowledging that this tendency might also have to do with students' lack of confidence in their English comprehension skills, he noted

They have a tendency to, it's interesting, when they ask the students near them, the American students, how to do such and such, the American student will give them an answer, but then later they'll come to me and they'll ask a question, and I know they've talked to the American students just based on what they're telling me and I say, 'Did they tell you to do this, this, and this?' And they'll say, 'Yes,' and I say, 'Well that's exactly what you should do.' They're just double checking that what they heard and understood was what needed to be done.

***Cross-cultural learning styles.*** Students were asked three additional questions in order to ascertain their perceptions of how studying in a U.S. institution of higher education might differ from studying in a Korean institution higher education. The three questions asked were

1. If you studied in the U.S. the same way you studied in Korea, would you be successful? Why or why not?
2. If you studied in Korea the same way you study in the U.S., would you be successful? Why or why not?
3. Would a typical U.S. student be successful if they studied in Korea? Why or why not?

In response to the first question, four students (S1, S2, S4 and S5) stated they would be successful students in the U.S. if they studied the same way they did in Korea; one student (S3) said he would “probably” be successful, and one student (S6) said she would not be successful. The students who said they would be successful stated that, overall, they didn’t feel their approach to learning in the U.S. differed much from the approach they used in Korea, and the fact that they were doing well academically in the U.S. was evidence that they didn’t need to change. S1 explained, “I’m using the same way to study, although it takes more time. Because I’ve been fairly successful here so far, this seems like the right approach.” The one student (S6) who said she would not be successful in the U.S. using a “Korean-style” of learning merely said, “I think it would be difficult. I studied hard in Korea but the way I study here fits me better.”

Asked if they would be successful studying in a Korean university in the same manner they studied in the U.S., three students (S2, S3 and S4) said “yes,” two (S1 and S6) said “no,” and one (S5) stated she “wasn’t sure.” The three students who replied that they would probably be successful back in Korea seemed to feel the fact that they are better students now would enable them to be better students in Korea as well. S3 stated, “If I were a master’s or doctoral student in Korea, I think I would be much stronger than I was before because I’ve become more knowledgeable now and am more used to studying on my own. I think I would be more successful.” S1 maintained that she would only be successful in Korea studying the way she does here “if the system there changed.” S6 said she would not be successful because she “. . . would need to change back to studying the *Korean way*.” She added, “Actually, I don’t want to go back to that style.” When asked to explain why she wasn’t sure if she’d be successful back in Korea, S5 explained, “I’d like to say I would be, but I’m not sure I can because the American

education system and the Korean education system are so different . . . If I go back to Korea I would have to match the way I study with the Korean system.”

Finally, the students were asked if they thought the “typical” U.S. student would be successful studying in Korea. Four of the students (S3, S4, S5 and S6) said a “typical” U.S. student would not be successful studying in Korea. The most common reason given for this belief was the differences in work load and culture of the classrooms. S6 said

I think it would be difficult for them. First of all, our systems are very different. U.S. students aren't used to studying as hard as we do. They also wouldn't understand why we can't ask questions or act the same way they do in class. I think they would have a hard time.

S1 and S2 disagreed. “A student who studies hard will do well no matter where they are,” said S2. S1 stated that, although not all U.S. students would be successful, the fact that “they are generally more active in their learning” could help them be good students in Korea.

A review of the responses to these three questions seemed to indicate that most of the student participants felt that the learning strategies used in Korea would be appropriate in the U.S. They didn't appear as certain about whether learning strategies used in the U.S. would work in Korea, however.

**Korean student challenges in the United States.** All participants were asked to identify difficulties or challenges that Korean students studying at U.S. institutions of higher education might face. Language was reported as the most common difficulty. Other challenges mentioned were adjusting to different styles of learning, particularly group work, understanding the expectations of teachers and regulations of the U.S. education system, knowing how to interact with teachers and American students, dealing with issues that arose from either cultural

differences or feelings of isolation, and learning how to handle everyday matters such as transportation, finances, and food.

One hundred percent of the participants mentioned language as being a difficulty or challenge for Korean students in the U.S. USF5 stated his belief that

I think the challenge for Korean students perennially has been using English as a second language. In fact, we've talked about this in the department, that there is a sense that for Korean students English is even a greater challenge than it is for students from other countries.

While other U.S. faculty participants felt that, for the most part, the English skills of Korean students they had in class were "good," they all agreed that having to use English as a second language in their studies was not an easy endeavor; the responses of the student and Korean faculty participants mirrored this sentiment. Describing his experience when he first came to the U.S. as an undergraduate student, KF1 related

At the first time it was not easy for me to catch up with everything like the other American students because (I was) listening to English and speaking English and writing English – well, definitely I had to use English in everything . . . Sometimes I had to record my professor's lecture, I had to reorganize everything, you know, it's really time consuming . . . I had a really tough time.

Asked to name some of the challenges he had encountered in the U.S., S4 responded, "At first, because my English wasn't good, it was hard to ask questions and comprehend what was going on in class." S3 related a story of how one of his first professors in the U.S. took him aside and asked if he was having any difficulties.

I think she was worried about me. She commented that the English I was using when writing my papers was poor, wasn't adequate. Because of her, I realized that at the very least the teacher needs to know how much I understand and can do. Because I wasn't used to having to show my knowledge in this way, I couldn't express myself properly. English language skills that were remarked on as being the most difficult for Korean students were speaking during class discussions, giving presentations, comprehending oral communication in the classroom, writing essays and research papers, and using grammar and vocabulary correctly. Other difficulties mentioned were responding quickly to questions being asked, asking questions, paraphrasing, and summarizing. In addition, three of the participants commented on the fact that having to do homework assignments in English was much more time consuming than it was for native English speakers. S2 said:

Of course, it takes more time to do things here compared to what it was like in Korea to understand, to read the textbook and do homework. Work that would only take me an hour in Korea takes me four hours here. That's something very difficult.

Another difficulty mentioned by several of the participants was adjusting to different styles of learning and thinking as well as understanding the expectations of teachers and regulations of the U.S. education system. S3 explained:

Most of the challenges have been related to getting used to professors and studying here. As I mentioned before, at first my behavior here was very similar to the way it was in Korea – I just sat typically quiet in class and listened. In the beginning, I think the professors thought I was one of those students who didn't understand or know anything.

Speaking of a dilemma he faced when he began his studies in the U.S., S4 said

What I personally feel, having experienced Korean education since elementary school and from being influenced by Korean teachers, when I came to America and saw the way Americans study, to be honest, it was a struggle for me. Should I study the same way Americans are studying or should I use the Korean style of learning? Should I just use a little of the American style?

Understanding subject material from “a U.S. point of view” was also mentioned as being difficult. S4 explained:

For example, when I write a paper in class and the topic is about technology in America what Americans think about something, as an international student, I have to imagine what Americans think. That’s a bit of a problem. That’s because the answer to the question that’s being asked has to be seen from a U.S. point of view. It’s hard for me to answer that kind of question directly – it’s a problem.

Six of the participants (S4, S5, S6, KF4, USF3 and USF4) mentioned having to do group work in class was a challenge for some Korean students not only because of communication difficulties but also because of the unfamiliarity with this learning technique and lack of understanding about how U.S. Americans interact. “I wonder about their ability to participate in groups,” observed USF4. S6 explained her feelings in this regard.

The way that classmates interact with each other is different. Here, when you have group projects and have to work with other students, it’s not easy to work closely with U.S. students because of cultural differences in the way we interact.

S5 described group projects as the least helpful classroom activity she experienced in the U.S.

If you have four people in a group, for example, it’s impossible for all four to do the same amount of work; there are always some students who don’t do as well as others.

Therefore, only active group members are leading the group, and sometimes finding a compromise between each different member's opinions is not always easy and smooth. One final academic difficulty for some Korean students that was mentioned by USF3, was understanding U.S. copyright rules and the concept of plagiarism as it is understood in the U.S. While admitting that American students also had trouble "using their own words" and citing sources, he felt this was sometimes particularly difficult for some of his international students, including Koreans.

Several of the students also related feelings of isolation as being a difficult for them and some faculty members felt that some American students did not always "make them feel welcome." In speaking of his experience, S4 said

In my major I was the first Korean student . . . the professors told me I was the first Korean student they'd had. They didn't seem to know how to deal with me. I didn't say much. Even when I took part in group projects, I felt like an outsider.

He also commented on the fact that some of his professors almost seemed surprised when he did well on class projects, as if they didn't expect him to succeed. "When I get a higher grade than the other students, some of the professors will ask me, 'Your English isn't as good as the other students – how did you get such a high grade?' They've even said it's amazing." S2 mentioned feeling that "the American students look down on me" whenever he gave presentations in class, and KF1 remembered that when he asked for help from his American classmates, many of them ignored him. In the eyes of USF4, several of his undergraduate students could do a better job of accepting and supporting those from different cultural backgrounds.

Groups are very social creatures and to feel comfortable in participating in groups requires respect and reassurance by group members, and I think our freshmen students have a lot to learn about diversity and about sharing.

He went on to say

When I was a Boy Scout we had something called ‘the Talking Stick’ and you couldn’t talk unless you were holding the talking stick, and some people don’t like to let that go.

And many of our international students are not passionate about demanding their time.

So I see them as very passive, but I don’t necessarily attribute that to them. In some ways it’s the environment that they’re trying to fit into that’s not exactly ready to hand them the talking stick.

Other hardships brought up were those related to practical matters such as financial hardships, adjusting to an American diet, and transportation for those who couldn’t drive or didn’t own a car. Missing friends and family was also mentioned.

**Korean student strengths.** Additionally, in an attempt to obtain more information about differences in student performance and behavior, all participants were asked to speak about what they perceived to be strengths of Korean students studying in U.S. universities. These perceptions were recorded with the understanding that individual differences in students exist. The most common theme that arose in this section was the hard working and motivated nature of students. Another common theme identified were the quality of academic assignments submitted, and less common themes were a willingness on the part of students to follow teachers’ instructions and guidance and the ability of students to memorize class material. Other strengths mentioned were a good competency in English and understanding of U.S. culture.

Eleven of the participants (S1, S3 through S6, KF2, USF2 through USF6) shared the impression that, in general, Korean students were hard working and motivated. USF6 summed this up by saying, “I think the Korean students that I’ve had, first of all, have been very diligent and they did very good work, very good work,” and USF4 observed that, in terms of being “good learners,” the South Korean students “may lead the pack” when compared to other Asian students in his classes. When asked to explain observed differences in the way in which Korean students and U.S. students study, USF3 said

They’re (Korean students) willing to spend more time; it’s not that they have more time. They’re willing to dedicate themselves to spending more time while the American students are not as dedicated to doing that in this day and age.

He went on to explain how he uses Korean students in his class as a way to push his American students.

Once they (American students) see the papers coming in, and they see their four-page paper and this guy’s (a Korean student) got twelve, a light bulb starts going off – whoa. What did I forget to put in that he put in? Now, we’ll talk about the first assignments and sometimes I’ll tell the Korean students, ‘You’re doing fine. You’re probably doing more than you need to, but that’s fine – don’t worry about it.’ Now the American students I tell them, ‘Hey, you need to get up to this level’ – a little higher bar.

While noting that he needed to be careful not to “deal in stereotypes,” he also felt that most of the Korean students he’d had were “hard working and diligent,” so much so that at times he had been tempted to encourage them to “lighten up a bit.” “This thing of working 16 hours a day on your school work on the weekends is really for the birds (sic). I mean, you’ve got to live a little bit.” For the students’ perspective, four of the student participants described themselves as

“hardworking,” and half felt that “stamina” and “persistence” were their strengths as students. S5 believed that the long hours of studying expected in Korea helped develop “patience” in students from that country. Preparation for class was also seen as a strength related to the hard-working nature of some Korean students. USF4 reflected, “They’re always prepared for class, so I can feel pretty confident that they have read the material. If I’ve assigned written work in preparation for class, they’ve done it or at least they’ve tried to do it.” “As far as being prepared,” said USF6, “I think their education system has very high standards.” In addition, good classroom attendance was seen by five participants (S2, S6, USF1, USF4 and USF3) as one more aspect of the dedicated study ethic of Korean students. USF4 stated

I may see them absent, but typically with South Koreans, if I see them absent, they’re sick. There’s not a higher priority elsewhere. It’s not necessarily that way with all our international students and certainly not that way with domestic students.

Another perceived strength commented on by all but one of the U.S. faculty participants was the quality of the academic work submitted by their Korean students. USF1 felt that the older Korean students she’d taught in particular tended to be “really model students.” “Their work is almost perfect by the time it’s turned in,” she stated. USF6 concurred. “When they have an assignment, they do every piece of it thoroughly, and they’re very conscientious about their written assignments, sometimes even more so than the American students.” When asked why he felt the quality of work submitted by his Korean students was sometimes better than the quality of work submitted by his domestic students, USF3 responded, “I think it’s focusing on detail. They’re very good at that, and when they write they write well . . . and they will write in a more concise way, and they footnote their materials. I mean, they’re very detailed.” He also felt that, in some ways, having to use English as a second language helped develop this skill.

Interesting enough, the Koreans, because they're used to looking up words and finding out what it means, where our American students aren't – they don't know a word they just go on. And then you'll ask them in class and you'll say, 'Well didn't you read that assignment?' and they'll say, 'Oh yeah I did,' and you say, 'You don't remember reading this word?' and they'll say, 'Oh yeah.' 'Well, what's it mean?' 'I don't know.'

**Comparison of responses.** Noticeable in the responses for this section was the fact that the faculty and student participants had very similar perceptions of the differences that might affect the performance and behavior of Korean students in the U.S. as well as the challenges faced by and the strengths of that population. There were only two exceptions to this. Only one of the Korean faculty participants noted that it was less common for Korean students to speak during class than it was for American students to speak in class. Perhaps relevant to this observation is the fact that both KF2 and KF4 stated the belief that classroom discussion was becoming more common in Korean institutions of higher education than it was in the past.

The other exception was that only U.S. faculty participants remarked on the quality of academic work submitted by Korean students. Although mentioning the hard-working nature of students as a strength, none of the students or Korean faculty participants made this observation, although S4 commented that his U.S. professors sometimes seemed surprised by the quality of his work.

### **Changes in Approach to Learning or Classroom Behavior**

Identifying observable changes in the learning approaches or classroom behavior of Korea students in U.S. institutions of higher education was the focus of Research Question Four. The approach that was taken to obtain information pertinent to this question involved asking students to comment on specific changes they had noted in themselves over the course of their

stay in the United States as well as recording the observations U.S. faculty participants had made of Korean students who had been in their classes. Although Korean faculty members were also asked to comment on ways they had also personally changed, they were not asked to comment on observed changes in Korean students at the university due to the fact that the majority of Korean faculty participants had not taught many Korean students in the U.S.

**Student observations.** When asked to comment on changes in their own approaches to learning and/or classroom behavior during the course of their studies in the U.S., all student participants observed that they had changed in some way, although all but one (S6) described those changes as being “minor.” S2 reflected, “Overall, the way I study is the same; it’s just that I spend more time studying here than I did before (because of need to use English).” The most common changes mentioned were improved English skills, an increase in independence in their approach to learning, and a better ability to apply learning. Other changes mentioned included more oral participation in class, an improved ability to concentrate and study for long periods of time, less reluctance to seek the help of professors after class, more overall confidence, a higher level of motivation, and a better ability to work with others, especially in groups. All students but one (S5) stated that, overall, they were better students now than they had been in Korea. Commenting on this improvement, S4 said, “It’s funny, even though I’m using a different language, English, here, my grades are much better than they were in Korea. I’m surprising myself!” Only one student believed that one of her strengths as a student in Korea had “weakened in the U.S.,” S1 felt that her ability to memorize facts had gotten worse since coming to America.

When asked to rank their English proficiency at the time of the study compared to their English proficiency in Korea, all students stated they had improved, in some cases dramatically.

Specific areas of improvement noted were speaking and writing. Speaking included the ability to take part more in class discussions, give presentations, ask questions in class, and speak with American students when doing group work. The ability to write research papers was mentioned by two graduate students (S1 and S3) as being one indication that their English writing ability had improved.

Three students (S1, S4, and S6) believed that their critical thinking skills had improved, and two graduate students (S3 and S5) felt they had become more independent in the way they studied. In describing her situation, S1 said:

I think I'm a slightly better student now than I was in Korea because in Korea I didn't have to do much critical thinking. Here, when I write a research paper, I have to write my own ideas and thinking in order to find the best answer to the question. That's why I think I'm a little better student than I was in Korea.

S4 stated that as a student in the U.S., she had become accustomed to "thinking more deeply" about what and why she was studying than she did as a student in Korea. After speaking of his belief that his professors in the U.S. encouraged him to be independent in his learning, S3 said, "This fact gives students more confidence to find answers for themselves. I've found that the American system supports this type of learning, and my own learning style has changed a bit here."

**Faculty observations.** Five of the U.S. faculty participants remarked that they had observed several noticeable differences in the learning strategies or the classroom behavior of Korean students they had in class. These changes included more active oral participation in class and an increased willingness on the part of students to ask for help.

Four of the faculty (USF1, USF3, USF5 and USF6) said they had observed some of their Korean students speaking more in class over the course of a semester. USF6 stated, “. . . at the beginning they don’t want to participate, but at the end of the semester they will be participating just like everybody else.” She felt that this increased involvement in class discussion also allowed them to get to know other students better. “I think once they open up and aren’t as reserved, at the end of the class, that’s when they have made more relationships with other students in the classroom.” USF5, while noting that his Korean students typically participated orally more as a class progressed, also stated that he felt this was because “. . . I structure the class that will in a way eventually require them to speak in order to gain the points that I know they want.” USF1 had observed that her older Korean students were more likely to become more vocal in class than her younger Korean students. “. . . the older ones, they tend to be leaders and are willing to take a chance and use their English and want to make the most of the time they are here.”

The other noticeable change noted by faculty regarded the degree to which Korean students asked for help both in and out of the classroom. Three faculty participants (USF2, USF3, and USF5) observed that several of their Korean students seemed particularly less hesitant to raise their hands and ask questions in class or come to them during office hours for guidance. USF5 related his experience of working with a Korean graduate student who was struggling. Initially, the student seemed reluctant to approach USF5 and ask for guidance, but after he had “initiated the relationship” by making a point of getting to know her, USF5 found that she began to seek his assistance frequently.

**Comparison of responses.** A review of the responses related to Research Question Four showed that the student participants made more observations about possible changes than faculty

participants did. The two themes that emerged from the faculty, speaking more in class and asking more questions, were both mentioned by students, but the faculty did not comment on any of the other changes identified by the student participants.

**Divergent themes.** An additional note of interest was the fact that both USF2 and USF6 expressed the opinion that not all of the changes they had observed in their Korean students were positive and that, in some ways, domestic students had a negative impact on Korean students.

USF6 explained:

If they mingle with the American students from the beginning, I would say their study habits would go down. I don't think that all American students aren't good students, but they don't have that study ethic that the international students have.

USF2 felt that when U.S. students did not participate actively in class, the international students were discouraged from doing so. After describing a situation in which one of his U.S. students had "perfected the art of sleeping while sitting upright" in class, he commented:

The international students will see this if they pay attention at all; they'll see this going on in the classroom, and how do you figure out what to do in a new culture? You watch what people around you are doing, and you go to a new learning culture and you say, oh well, I'd sure like to ask him this, but nobody's saying anything. And so I'm sure that it's difficult for them to figure out what they're really supposed to do.

KF3, while not speaking specifically of changes in Korean students' classroom behavior as a result of the behavior of American students, reinforced the notion that an influence exists.

Speaking of Korean university students in the U.S., he said, "I would say they probably act on their own self-conceived notion of what (U.S.) American students are like and try to conform to that idea that they have in their minds."

Finally, one undergraduate student brought up the point that it could not be conclusively determined that changes in learning approach and behavior that took place in students necessarily had to do with the mere fact that they were studying in the U.S. S4, while noting that his approach to learning had changed, noted that there may have been other reasons for this change. “I don’t think my learning style has changed *because* I came to the U.S. – I changed because I personally realized I needed to get serious about studying and because I started thinking about the way I study.”

### **Issues of Assimilation versus Acculturation**

A major focus of this study was to determine if success in the classroom is best secured by strategies associated with the process of assimilation or the process of acculturation from the point of view of both students and faculty. Addressing this focus involved gathering information related to both Research Question Five and Research Question Six. Research Question Five implies an understanding on the part of participants not only about the differences between assimilation and acculturation but also about teaching and learning strategies that might be associated with each of these processes. To get at these insights, all participants were asked a series of questions aimed at identifying their awareness of some of the issues related to cross-cultural education and assimilation versus acculturation. They were then asked to comment on various teaching and learning strategies and make recommendations to both Korean students and faculty members who had Korean students in their classes. It was intended that the combination of responses from all of these questions, in addition to information related to influences on education collected for Research Question One and Two, would allow conclusions to be made about both Research Question Five and Research Question Six.

**Notions of assimilation and acculturation.** Although not specifically asked to define “assimilation” or explain their interpretation of this process as opposed to the “process of acculturation,” all participants were asked a series of questions intended to probe their understanding and record their perceptions of the processes Korean students went through when adapting to institutions of higher education in the United States. Some of the questions asked to students participants in this regard were

1. Do you feel pressured to “become American” in the way you study? Why or why not?
2. To be successful in the U.S. classroom, do you feel you have to approach learning in the same way U.S. students approach learning? Why or why not?
3. Overall, do you feel your U.S. instructors are trying to get you to see things from an American point of view? Why or why not?
4. Do you feel your U.S. instructors are supportive of the way you study and understand your viewpoint and background? Please explain.
5. Do you feel “less Korean” than you did when you arrived here? Why or why not?
6. Are you more supportive of the U.S. viewpoint than you were when you first arrived here? Why or why not?
7. Have you changed your opinion about U.S. politics since coming here? If so, please explain these changes.

To capture the perceptions of faculty participants about issues related to assimilation and acculturation, both Korean and U.S. faculty were asked several questions, including:

1. Should Korean students “become American” in the way they study in order to be successful in U.S. universities? Why or why not?

2. Have you personally changed your teaching strategies as a result of having Korean students in your classroom? Please explain.
3. Should U.S. professors change their teaching strategies in order to accommodate Korean students in their classrooms?
4. Have you as an instructor tried to change the learning strategies of Korean students in your classroom? If so, what are the ways in which you try to change their learning strategies?
5. What are some things you have learned from the Korean students in your classes?

One common theme that emerged from the responses of both student and faculty participants was related to the question of whether Korean students should “become American” in the way they studied. Another common theme was the question of whether U.S. instructors should change their teaching strategies in order to help Korean students. In addition, the student participants remarked on whether or not they had undergone changes in attitudes about the U.S.

*“Becoming American.”* Both student and faculty participants were asked if, in order to be successful students in U.S. universities, Korean students needed to “become American” in the way they studied. One hundred percent of the participants stated “no,” some very emphatically. “That strikes me as being very culturally insensitive and even further imperialistic,” stated USF5. “I do not think Korean students need to become American.” The most commonly mentioned reason given for the belief that Korean students do not need to adopt “an American style” of learning had to do with the perception that studying was a “personal thing” and that each student had to “find his or her way,” regardless of one’s cultural background or upbringing. In explaining his belief that it wasn’t necessary for him to change his learning strategies, S4 said

When I look at the (U.S.) American friends I'm studying with, there are a few that study the same way I do. I think the way you study is an individual thing – you have to find the way that's right for you personally. There isn't just one method.

KF3 added, “Whether you are studying in Korea or here, it's between you and the text, you know, students and the text . . . you just have to do it alone.” It was also mentioned by four of the U.S. faculty members (USF1, USF2, USF3, and USF6) that, since not all U.S. students were good students, imitating their learning strategies would be a mistake. USF1 explained this viewpoint.

It's important to understand the (U.S.) American system and know what's being asked of you, but there's a lot of good from where they've come from and have, so becoming more American? I don't know how you phrase it but just saying ‘become more American and you'll do fine,’ no, I don't feel comfortable with that. There are so many (U.S.) American students out there who don't have a clue what to do or how to study.

Two students and one Korean faculty participant (S2, S5 and KF2) also said that, for the most part, the “Korean way of studying” works in the U.S. S5 said

To be honest, I know that to be successful here I need to adjust my learning style to some degree, but I feel that the same way I studied in Korea also works here for the most part. We have to take advantage of the strength of the Korean studying style and use it here.

Basing his opinion on his experience as a student in the U.S., KF2 related

I didn't become American in studying in the United States . . . I think they (Korean students) can keep their own traditional background from South Korea because the South Korean education system is much more, I think it challenged them, actually – many tests, many standardized tests.

Although the student participants said they didn't feel the need to "become American" in the way they study, all of them stated they felt at least one type of pressure to "become American" in the way they studied in the U.S. This pressure, however, seemed to be related more to the need to use English, speak in class, and work in groups than a deliberate attempt by anyone to "change them." When talking of when she feels this pressure, S5 stated

Especially during class when we have presentations and class discussions, first of all because my speaking is weaker. I know I need to participate, but it's hard. I tell myself I need to do the same thing as the other students, but I'm not exactly sure how.

S1 shared the feeling that she "feels pressure" in all of her classes. She elaborated:

The teachers don't tell me I have to do something a certain way, but because my writing skills aren't as good as that of the U.S. students, I always have to go to the Writing Center, and teachers agree that's a good idea.

Bringing up a "pressure" she has felt in the U.S., S6 said

I have felt pressured to be more involved in activities the way U.S. Americans are. If I look at my resume, I realize I don't have many of the experiences that U.S. students do. It makes me realize I haven't done anything. This makes me think that I need to do more, to have more experiences.

She added, "No one has really pressured me to do this – I have just felt this pressure myself by observing others here."

When asked if their professors in the U.S. "try to get them to see things from an U.S. point of view," three of the students (S1, S2, and S5) maintained that this was the case. S3, S4 and S6, on the other hand, stated that they either had not noticed this or believed that most of their teachers tried to "see things from an international students' viewpoint." S5 felt that her

instructors tried to get her to see things from a U.S. viewpoint in an “indirect” manner. “For example,” she said, “the way they use email – that’s a U.S. American style. In addition, the way that they teach content during the class – indirectly they force us to see the content from the perspective of Americans.” It was S1’s belief that

I don’t think they are intentionally trying to do that, but I also don’t think they consider all the cultural backgrounds of the students. They still see things the way they see things – from a U.S. point of view. They don’t really ask much about the different cultures of the students.

Representing the opposite opinion was S6, who said, “On the contrary, I think my professors try to see things from my point of view.” S3 added:

It seems to me that in general the professors here appear to try and put learning into an international or global context or perspective and take into consideration the students’ viewpoints. As opposed to getting international students to see things from the U.S. point of view, they seem to look at things in the opposite way.

The student participants were also divided when asked if their U.S. instructors were supportive of the way they studied and their cultural viewpoint and background. Two students (S3 and S4) said “yes,” two students (S1, and S2) said “some,” and two students (S5 and S6) said “no.” Representing the opinion that his instructors were supportive, S4 said, “The professors look carefully at my work and ask me things they’re curious about of if they don’t understand something.” It was S6’s opinion, however, that

The teachers are kind and understand my situation, but I think they don’t get to understand us deeply, and I don’t think they try to change their teaching styles for us. In the end, students have to adjust to the teachers.

S3 said that some of her teachers had been supportive, but added

They say they understand how hard it must be to study here, but I'm not sure if many of them have ever actually studied overseas, so they don't really know what it's like. What they say and the way they act are different.

Finally, the U.S. faculty participants were asked to give examples of ways in which they had tried to change the learning strategies of the Korean students in their classes. All members of this group mentioned at least one instance of a way in which they attempted to change the behavior or habits of their Korean students. The most common attempted change was in the students' level of oral participation in class. All but one of the faculty said they either encouraged or required their Korean students to speak more in class. Methods used to this end included offering "participation points," calling on individual students during class discussions, requiring oral presentations, and using words of encouragement or persuasion when students were hesitant to speak. USF6 said the students in her classes had no choice but to speak in class.

When we do the group projects or case studies, they have to interact. They are forced, forced to do that. And also with their minute talks that we have in every class I teach, they are forced to get up in front of the class, to do a little PowerPoint presentation and to disseminate knowledge to the other students and then answer questions that they may have about their presentation. So they're forced to do that – it's a requirement.

S5 also made oral participation a part of the grade of his courses. "If there's an assignment that has value attached to it, then they are more motivated," he reported. In addition, he attempted to encourage more active engagement in class with his Asian students by trying to explain this desired behavior in a cultural context. When confronted with Asian students who are reluctant to confirm their understanding of the material, he occasionally said to them:

I understand that you want to save face, and you want me to save face. And I appreciate that and I thank you for your respect, but it's very important to me that we understand each other, and so if you are not understanding you will help me save face better if you will let me know that I can help you.

USF3 mentioned trying to put Korean as well as other Asian students who are afraid of speaking at ease to encourage them to talk more.

(Speaking in class) frightens them because they're not good at it or they're afraid they're going to say something that will upset someone or will embarrass someone . . . I've talked with them about that and I say, 'Well, don't worry about that. That's how you learn. We're not going to hold that against you.'

Four faculty participants (USF1, USF3, USF4, and USF6) also mentioned that they made an effort to improve the ability of their Korean students to work with others, especially in groups. Part of this attempt, said USF3 and USF4, involved trying to change the attitudes of both Korean students and domestic students. When doing group work, USF3 tried to put Korean students in groups with only non-Korean students. Then, in his words

I usually instruct the class, look, you're going to have international students in your group, so that means you're going to have to be a little more patient and a little more understanding and give them an assignment that is not overly difficult.

As part of his undergraduate courses, USF4 sometimes requires students to attend co-curricular events. He realized, however, that getting connected to other students who will attend these activities might be more challenging for some of the international students. "That requires that you step out to ask a friend, and that may require a bit of Americanization about how they approach relationships and so forth." Some additional ways in which faculty reported "trying to

change” Korean students habits and behavior were getting them to think “more critically” and to apply learning (in the words of USF1, “. . . giving them assignments that they can’t just memorize and spout back”), suggesting revisions in their reading habits, teaching them to paraphrase and organize their essays in a different manner, and encouraging them to make use of professors’ office hours to get extra assistance.

***Changing teaching strategies.*** When questioned about whether or not U.S. instructors should change their teaching styles or strategies in order to help Korean students be more successful in the U.S., the majority of participants (S1 through S4, S6, KF1, KF2, KF3, USF2, USF4, and USF6) stated that they should not, although several mentioned that faculty should make some accommodations for Korean students. The Korean faculty members in particular voiced the opinion that U.S. teachers should not make changes in the way they teach in order to help Korean students. KF2 stated that teaching Korean students in a different manner than others does not help them. Speaking of Korean students, he said, “They decided to come to the United States, and they expected something; they know what they need to deal with. But if the professor here cares too much about their weak point, their limitation, they may be weaker.” Asked if he would change the way he teaches if he had Korean students in his class, KF3 responded:

I would treat them exactly, just like my American students. I probably would not show them any favors. I’m not going to go out of my way because 1) I’m a little too intimately familiar with where they’re coming from, and 2) I just don’t think it’s fair to my other students.

In the opinion of USF6, making accommodations for Korean students in the classroom “sets them apart. It makes them feel different. Therefore, I wouldn’t do that.” USF4 also saw a

negative consequence to students if he taught differently for different groups of students. “I honestly think that students are students are students, and the advice I would give for working with a student from X is pretty much the advice I would give for a student from Y.” For the most part, the student participants agreed that their U.S. instructors do not need to change the way they teach. S3 represented this group:

Because the students coming from Korea are here to learn something different and are learning in a different way, it’s hard to say that they (U.S. teachers) have to change their teaching style completely, 100%, because we are here to learn something new . . . overall I don’t think teachers need to change the way they teach.

Some of the students, like S1, felt that while changes in overall teaching methodology were not necessary, some accommodations could be made for Korean students. She explained, “I don’t think they should change their teaching or assessment methods, but if you look at the situation of Korean and international students, they can make accommodations, for example, letting students use a dictionary.” KF4 expressed a similar viewpoint and pointed out that too much inflexibility on the part of U.S. teachers was also not helpful.

I have seen, I met faculty and some (U.S.) American students or English-speaking students who were raised in an English-speaking culture saying ‘this is your choice’ (to Korean students). ‘You chose to study in an American institution, so therefore language shouldn’t be a factor for you doing certain jobs in classrooms . . . you know that you are at a disadvantage at the language, but since no one forced you to study here, that’s your choice, so it shouldn’t be an excuse for not doing certain things or not being able to explain or excel in the studying.’

KF4 went on to say

That may be true, but still I think the role of faculty or the fellow students or the friends is to be more understanding of his or her students or the fellow students. Yes, they must play by the same rules; they must be measured by the same rules . . . but without altering the measuring tools, they can still help them to bring their understanding of the material, their capability in engaging in class activities, by giving them more help or understanding their situation.

***Changing student attitudes.*** In addition, all students were asked if their experience of studying and living in the United States had made them “more supportive” of the U.S. viewpoint. In asking this question during the interview, the co-researcher did not give examples of what this “viewpoint” might be. Five of the participants (S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6) felt that they were now more supportive, and one participant (S1) stated she was not. “I feel pretty neutral about it,” S1 said. “It’s not bad or good. I don’t like U.S. any more than I used to. Everywhere you go there are kind people and unkind people.” Representing those who said they were more supportive of the U.S. viewpoint, S6 claimed, “In the past, I didn’t have a negative view of America, but now I feel more comfortable here and even think I could live here in the future. Yes, I think I’ve become more positive about America.” S3 mentioned that overall his opinion about America and Americans has not changed too much but stated that he is more positive about the American education system than he used to be.

The student participants were also asked if their view of U.S. politics had changed since coming to study in America. Four participants (S2, S3, S5 and S6) said that their opinion had changed in some manner; one (S4) said he wasn’t sure if it had changed, and one student (S1) said her opinion had not changed. Of the participants who said their opinion about U.S. politics had changed, two (S3 and S5) said they had a more positive view of U.S. politics than before;

one (S6) stated she was “more interested” in U.S. politics than she had been, and one (S2) said he was “less interested” in U.S. politics than he had been. When asked why he had become more supportive of U.S. politics, S5 said he was impressed that the American political system allowed people to express their opinions and work towards mutually beneficial solutions to problems. He also got the impression that, “. . . the ethics or morals of the politicians seem more important to Americans than they do to Koreans.”

Finally, the students were asked if they felt “less Korean” than they did before arriving in the United States. Four of the students (S1, S2, S3, S6) stated they did not feel “less Korean,” one (S4) said he felt the same but that his friends back in Korea remarked that “he had changed,” and one participant (S5) said she did feel “less Korean.” Two of the participants (S1 and S2) said they actually felt “more Korean” than they did prior to their arrival in the U.S. They attributed this to being able to compare Korean culture to other cultures they are exposed to in the U.S. and realizing how much they miss certain aspects of Korea. “It makes me realize how important my own country is,” said S1. S6 said that, although she “still feels very Korean,” she also felt “a little more Americanized than I was.” When asked why she felt “less Korean” than before, S5 replied, “I’ve changed my way of thinking – I think it has broadened.”

**Students’ perceptions of class activities.** Part of determining teaching and learning strategies associated with processes of cross-cultural adaptation is gauging the perceptions of those involved in the educational process of strategies they have familiarity with. To this end, the student participants in this study were asked to describe their opinions of several learning activities they had experienced in the U.S. All students were asked which learning activities they had experienced were the easiest, the most difficult, the most enjoyable, the least enjoyable, the most helpful, and the least helpful. They were also questioned about which types of instructor

feedback were the most helpful and the least helpful. A review of the student responses shows little consensus in their replies; their answers varied widely. The only comment that was made by more than two of the participants was the belief that the best type of feedback was that which was “detailed” and “complete.” All six participants made mention of this.

In order of the frequency of comment, the activities student participants found *easiest* were those related to their majors, math assignments, quizzes (particularly open-book online), practical experiences (like field trips), those related to their cultural backgrounds, activities they could do alone, and reading assignments. The *most difficult* activities named were giving presentations, group projects, those that required an understanding of specialized English vocabulary, those that required an understanding of U.S. culture, those that relied only on the textbook, and research papers.

Activities described as *most enjoyable* were practical, hands-on learning experiences, independent research, field trips, analyzing sentence structure, and giving presentations. *Least enjoyable* activities were discussions unrelated to the personal interest of students, textbook reading, and research paper writing. Two participants could not think of activities they did not enjoy.

The *most helpful* activities mentioned were group projects, internship opportunities, activities related to the students’ major or background, and those which provided “new information or knowledge” to students. *Least helpful* activities were group projects, subjects unrelated to the students’ major or background, and pop quizzes.

In terms of instructor feedback, all students felt that detailed comments on students’ performances were the most helpful. This included information on mistakes students had made, especially with their English. It was also said that feedback that praised or encouraged students

was appreciated. When asked about *least helpful feedback*, one student mentioned that taking points off for small grammar mistakes in students' writing even when the content was good was not helpful. Another student said that the feedback given by her teaching assistants was usually not helpful.

It was interesting to note that group work was mentioned in several of these categories; the opinion students had of this activity was quite different. It was mentioned as being the *most helpful*, *least helpful*, and *most difficult*. Students also had different opinions about giving presentations. Two described this activity as being the *most difficult* and one as the *most enjoyable*.

**Recommended teaching and learning strategies.** In addition, all student and faculty participants were requested to make suggestions about strategies that promoted meaningful learning experiences for both students and faculty. In reviewing these suggestions, three major types of suggestions emerged – those related to communication, attitude, and academics.

***Suggestions to U.S. faculty.*** All student and faculty participants were asked to make suggestions to U.S. instructors about how to help Korean students in their classes have successful learning experiences. Each participant came up with at least one suggestion. The suggestions appeared to fall into one or more of three categories: communication issues, teacher attitudes, and academic matters. Related to communication, the most commonly given recommendations were taking into consideration English language difficulties, providing students assistance with and advice about English language learning, and encouraging students to speak in class. Other communication suggestions were concerning the presentation of class material and assumptions about students' lack of oral participation.

The two most common suggestions regarding communication were regarding the students' use of English as a second language. Five student participants (S1, S2, S3, S4, S6) and one Korean faculty participant (KF4) said that U.S. professors should take into consideration the fact that English is not the first language of Korean students. While not all these participants stated that special accommodations should be given to students because of this fact, these five felt that, at the very least, an understanding of the language difficulties Korean students encountered was helpful. Put simply, S2 asked of U.S. instructors, "Please be understanding of our language problems." S3 also said, "Be aware of the language difficulties of Korean students. Because of this, Korean students are hesitant to answer questions or speak." Allowing students a little more time to respond to questions, providing some extra time for in-class tests and written assignments, and allowing students to use Korean-English dictionaries in class were three accommodations that were suggested. Six participants (S1, S3, USF1, USF3, USF5, and USF6) stated that teachers should not only be aware of these language difficulties but also take an active role in improving the English ability of their Korean students. "I think most Korean students probably need some additional support in their language development in terms of English," said USF5. Suggestions given in this regard were providing detailed feedback on the written and oral mistakes of students (S1), encouraging students to speak more in class (S3), using online discussion boards to improve writing skills (USF1), and encouraging students to speak English outside of class (USF1, USF3 and USF6). USF6 felt that one way to encourage students in this way was to recommend they join some type of campus or community organization. "... Their (Korean students) English speaking skills are not as good, and they know this," she said. "So we have to try and help draw them out and feel a part of the university, and they will certainly succeed then."

Encouraging Korean students to speak in class was a suggestion made by six participants (S3, KF4, USF1, USF2, USF3, and USF5). Recommended strategies aimed at encouraging this behavior were

1. Calling on individual students (S3, KF4, USF3, and USF5)
2. Giving participation points (USF1 and USF2)
3. Setting an example by asking questions to students (KF4)
4. Giving assignments that require speaking (e.g. presentations, group projects) (USF1, USF3, and USF5)
5. Explaining the reason that oral participation is important (USF3 and USF5)
6. “Gently” encouraging students to speak in class (USF3 and USF5)

Four participants (S1, S3, KF1, and USF3) felt that it was helpful for students if teachers spoke clearly and took the time to rephrase certain difficult points when presenting class material. In the words of USF3

I also tell them (other instructors) to be patient with them (Korean students) in class, not to talk too fast because they have difficulty, as I would, picking up what they're telling them in class. I always watch my Korean or Indian or whatever country they're from students, and I can tell by the look in their eyes whether they're catching something or not. Then it tells me I (sic) got to go back and rephrase it sometimes.

When presenting classroom material, S4 and USF5 also pointed out that observing students in an attempt to gauge their level of comprehension was helpful. “It helps me if they (teachers) confirm that we are understanding, if they ask if we understand, to make sure we are following,” reflected S4. “I think it's important to have opportunities to assess understanding along the way,” agreed USF5.

The final communicative suggestion, made by three participants (KF3, USF3, and USF4), was that teachers should not assume a lack of oral participation by Korean students in the classroom means that students are not following or paying attention. “I would say not to interpret their silence or lack of participation in classroom discussions or activities as a sign of laxity,” said KF3. “They are probably trying to be deferent to the teacher by remaining silent.” USF4 concurred. “I think the phrase that came to my mind first is that ‘still waters run deep.’ I wouldn’t assume that that very even keel persona in class is reflective of a lack of interest or a lack of curiosity.”

The largest number of suggestions that were made had to do with the attitude and approach of teachers towards Korean students. Seven participants (S1, S3, KF4, USF3, USF4, USF5, and USF6) stated that it was helpful when teachers encouraged and provided emotional support to students. Both S1 and S3 recalled that their most helpful instructors in the U.S. were “kind” and “supportive.” In describing one of her favorite teachers, S1 said, “He gave me a lot of advice about living here and emotional help. When I took a test, he took the time to ask me how I did and encouraged me warmly. He seemed like a very warm person.” KF3 mentioned that “being flexible and providing a little more guidance” was an important part of being supportive. When asked about advice he would give other faculty members, USF4 replied, “I guess be friendly to these students . . . I have the feeling that we are considered a friendly campus to most of our undergraduate students, but some people need a friend a little bit more.”

Showing an interest in and getting to know Korean students was seen by eight participants (S4, KF1, KF2, KF4, USF2, USF3, USF4, and USF5) as also being of importance. “I like to get to know my students,” said USF4, “and I would encourage our faculty here to get to

know their students at an appropriate level.” USF5 stated, “I do think faculty have to be proactive in that regard.” He continued:

If you don’t develop a relationship – that’s difficult to do in a big class, I realize – but I think it’s important to try and do that as much as you can, and to simply present yourself as a person who wants them to succeed.

Specific suggestions that were made in this regard were

1. Having students write autobiographies at the beginning of the semester (KF1, KF2, USF4)
2. Learning how to pronounce and remembering their names (S4, USF4)
3. Personally inviting students to the teacher’s office after class (S4, USF3, USF5)
4. Asking questions about students’ country, culture, and customs (KF4, USF3, USF5)
5. Inquiring about students’ welfare if they missed class (KF1 and USF4)
6. Finding out what students’ future plans are (USF3)

Most of the participants who made these suggestions also pointed out that these were approaches that should be taken with all students, regardless of their nationalities or cultural backgrounds.

In addition, seven participants (KF1, KF2, KF3, USF1, USF4, USF5 and USF6) also suggested that teachers take care not to embarrass or alienate the Korean students in their classrooms. It was mentioned that “not putting students on the spot” or “making them lose face” in front of others was important. Recommended methods of avoiding this occurrence were

1. Using student errors as points for general discussion without identifying which students made those errors (USF1)
2. Making use of group presentations instead of individual presentations (USF4)
3. Inviting students to take part in class discussions in “non-threatening” ways (USF5)

4. Not bringing too much attention to student differences; treating Korean students no differently than other students (KF2, USF4 and USF6)
5. Using “anonymous” question activities (where students can write questions instead of ask them out-loud) (USF5)

Part of making Korean students feel as “if they belong” to the class, said four participants, (S6, USF1, USF3 and USF4), was helping facilitate interaction between Korean students and U.S. students in the classroom. In the opinion of S6

When we first start a class, we don’t know anyone. It would be helpful if the professor helps us make groups when we have group projects instead of just saying, ‘Okay, make a group.’ If they can assign us to groups and introduce us to other students, it would be helpful.

The three faculty members who made this suggestion all made conscious attempts to help Korean students get to know and work with other students, especially in groups. USF4 offered, “I might suggest that if they’re doing teams that they (teachers) find ways to develop diversity coping skills among all students.” Developing these skills, according to both USF4 and USF3, involved thinking carefully about the makeup of each group (i.e. making sure that international students from the same nationality are not in the same group, partnering them with domestic students who seem to have a more “welcoming attitude”) and encouraging domestic students to be understanding of the Korean students’ language limitations and assigning group roles accordingly. USF3 suggested that he sometimes used his Korean students who were doing well in class or had certain skills to help U.S. students who were struggling. He felt that this gave the Korean students more confidence and encouraged domestic students to seek help from and get to know their Korean classmates.

The participants also made several suggestions aimed at helping Korean students succeed academically. Some of these suggestions had a relation to but were not necessarily about the students' use of English as a second language. The suggestions included

1. Allowing students a little more time to complete in-class assignments or tests (S1 and KF1), or at least realizing that it might take them more time (KF1)
2. Giving students the opportunity for extra credit (S2 and S4)
3. Providing students the opportunity to make up work they struggled with (S2 and S4)
4. Providing direct guidance and instructions when explaining assignments; not assuming Korean students know what to do (S5)
5. Explaining the reasons or rationale behind certain classroom activities/assignments (S5)
6. Setting up “mentoring groups” where domestic and international students can work together and help each other on projects (USF1)
7. Encouraging students to apply learning to a Korean context by specifically asking them to do so (USF3)
8. Pointing out when class materials might only apply to a U.S. context (USF3)
9. Clearly explaining issues of and helping students avoid “plagiarism” (USF3)
10. Making students aware of campus resources (e.g. writing center, tutoring services) (USF1)
11. Requiring or encouraging all students to take part in co-curricular events or join community organizations (USF4 and USF6)
12. Asking U.S. students to go first when giving oral presentations so that international students will have “an example” of how they are done (USF6)

Regarding this final suggestion, USF6 explained

I would not actually make an international student be the first one because that would be even more pressure on them. So always lead with a (U.S.) American student, unless you don't have any, and that could be a possibility. So if you don't have a (U.S.) American student, you have to think about the students in your classroom.

USF6 also stated that even though she usually does not like to make accommodations for international students because she feels that may "set them apart," she once allowed an East Asian student who had particular difficulty speaking in front of the class to give her presentation from her seat at the back of the classroom.

When explaining his suggestion that teachers should help students put learning into a Korean context, USF3 said, "Usually in class what I do is say, 'Don't think about America and what America does. Think about what's happening in your country and how you can apply this to what happens in your country.'" If subject material was clearly relevant to only the U.S., he made a point of telling students, "Look, this probably does not apply to your country."

One final suggestion, made by KF2, was to U.S. instructors whose Korean students complained to them about the number of assignments or the difficulty of coursework. Because of the fact that most Korean students are used to the "tough education system" in South Korea, he advised U.S. teachers to realize that, "They (Korean students) can deal with it. I believe they can easily deal with it. Maybe they can say 'oh, it's tough; it's hard' but in their mind, 'ah, it's easy.' That's not good for them. It should be tough." He concluded, "Don't make Korean students lazy for their learning (sic) . . . please do not provide any excuse or option for them – I mean except for special cases."

***Suggestions to Korean students.*** In addition to suggestions for U.S. instructors, all participants were asked to make suggestions for Korean students coming to U.S. universities. These recommendations could also be categorized as those related to communication, attitude, and academics.

All of the suggestions related to communication were made by faculty participants and had to do with language learning strategies or skills. Speaking, reading, writing, listening and vocabulary learning were areas of language development that the faculty concentrated on. Five participants (USF1, USF2, USF3, USF5 and USF6) all felt that, even after students had met the English proficiency admission requirement of the university, it was important for students to realize that language learning was an ongoing process and that they would need to continue to work on improving their English language skills. USF5 reflected

I think most Korean students probably need some additional support in their language development in terms of English. Even though they may go to a language learning program . . . when they come out they may have some basic skills . . . it's a real challenge.

When asked what recommendations she would give to Korean students coming to study in the U.S., USF6 said, "I would say number one – practice your English speaking skills." All participants who mentioned that continuing to improve English language skills was important stated that the ability to use spoken English was an important part of this. The most common method suggested to improve spoken English proficiency was spending as much time outside of class speaking English by interacting with native English speakers. USF5 recommended that Korean students find conversational partners who will encourage them to speak more and provide feedback on mistakes they make. Both USF3 and USF6 felt that Korean students who were actively involved in campus and community events and organizations generally improved

their English speaking and listening skills more markedly than those who only “hung out” with other Koreans.

Other suggestions made about English improvement were related to reading, writing, and vocabulary building skills. USF2 recommended that, when reading textbooks or class materials, Korean students work on improving their skimming and scanning skills. “Don’t feel like you’ve got to remember every single word,” he said. “Try to focus on the concepts, the big stuff.” USF2 also recommended that students try to “read more than the textbook.” Regarding the improvement of writing skills, he related, “This is something that I tell all my students when I talk about improving writing – I say we’re always revising. I say I can’t write a three-line e-mail message without revising at least twice. . . . So I would tell them to keep working on writing and their language in general.” Three professors (USF1, USF5 and USF6) felt it was important for Korean students to make use of the school’s Writing Center services. Finally, two faculty members, (USF2 and USF3) emphasized the importance of students to keep increasing their vocabulary; making use of vocabulary lists and flash cards were mentioned as two ways to work toward this end.

The most common suggestion made about the attitude or approach Korean students should take in order to help them have meaningful experiences in the United States was for students to ask for help from classmates and teachers. Nine participants (S2, S3, S4, S6, KF1, KF2, KF4, USF3 and USF5) brought this up. This was seen to have both social and academic benefits. In the words of S4

Like I’m doing, get close to your classmates and exchange information with them. If you miss important content or an important point in class, ask your friends, and they will tell

you. Before a test, professors always tell you the important points that will be on that test.

At that time, friends can especially help you understand what you missed.

S6 agreed. “If you have problems, you need to talk to them (professors) and make them realize what you need help with. That’s a key to being successful here.” Along this line, KF4 suggested

Don’t be afraid to ask for help from fellow students and professors and anyone who’s around . . . It’s very easy to get help from the teachers and instructors, and there are tutoring systems and other ways and means to help students in their class or at least not to fail or to learn something so that they can continue to move on.

USF3’s recommendation for Korean students was similar.

The other thing I tell them is you need to, you need to ask questions if you’re having problems, and if you’re afraid to do it in class go immediately to the professor after the class is over and ask the questions because if you don’t you’re not going to do well.

Two of the students (S2 and S3) specifically remarked on the importance of approaching teachers for help. According to S3:

They (Korean students) need to spend a lot of time ‘following’ the teachers. I mean they should because the teachers here are more open-minded than in Korea and have regular office hours; take advantage of those office hours, meet with them and ask for help. If they do this, I believe they will develop their abilities and study habits very much.

Nine participants (S4, KF1, KF3, KF4, USF1, USF2, USF3, USF5 and USF6) also said that spending time with and getting to know non-Koreans was also helpful not only in terms of improving English skills but also in order to learn more about U.S. culture and become “more connected” to the community. Speaking to Korean students coming to or already in the U.S., KF1 said, “As far as a practical strategy, have a good relationship with American friends and

your professors.” He went on to explain that when he was an undergraduate student in the U.S., he felt more isolated and struggled more with his English before making the conscious decision to get an American roommate in the residence hall. “I had to totally change my living environment,” he related. Even though this sharing a room with a U.S. student was not always easy (“. . . he had never stayed with an alien like me”), on hindsight he realized how beneficial that experience had been. Agreeing with the belief that this type of interaction was important, USF5 remarked:

First of all, I think they (Korean students) would benefit greatly if they can find other American students to whom they can relate. My observation about this university is that the cultural enclaves are clearly earmarked . . . there’s very little intercultural integration. In truth, I think that happens not just as a result of studying about it but by experiencing it. So I would say if Korean students could make American friends, they can help them chart the course even better sometimes than professors.

Suggestions on ways to interact with others included initiating conversation in the classroom, joining campus and community organizations, getting on-campus jobs, living with those from other countries, and doing volunteer work in the community.

The sentiment was also expressed that, although some interaction with fellow Korean students was understandable, Korean students in the U.S. should not spend “too much time” with their fellow expatriates. Five faculty participants (KF1, USF1, USF2, USF3 and USF6) mentioned this. Describing one of her former Korean graduate assistants who she felt didn’t learn as much as he could have, USF6 said, “He associated with the Korean association; everything he did was with Korean students. Therefore, he did not learn as much about the American way of life or the United States.”

Other suggestions of this nature made by the participants were for Korean students to

1. Work hard and be persistent (S1, S2, S5, and KF2)
2. Not be overly concerned with the ranking of the school (KF2 and KF4)
3. Have the courage to persist even if confronted with “less open-minded” people (USF4)
4. Not feel that you need to be like Americans (KF2)
5. Remember how challenging school in Korea was (KF2)
6. Try to relax and have some fun (USF2)
7. Not be ashamed about things you don’t know (S5)
8. Be receptive (USF2)
9. Know the reason you came to the U.S. (KF4)

Regarding this last suggestion, KF4 said:

I have seen cases where students failed to achieve what they wanted to achieve because they lacked the goal or they lacked what they wanted; they didn’t know what they wanted to do. Sometimes they were just sent by their parents. So they need, those students, before coming to the United States, they need to think about themselves and the reasons they come here and then once they come over here, then they need to know the institution or the community well so that they can adapt to the society.

Finally, several recommendations were made to students on ways they can be successful academically. These suggestions ranged from the overall strategy adopted by students to very specific suggestions. Three participants (S5, KF1 and KF4) felt it was important for Korean students to “find their own way” to study here, that it was not necessary to rely on or copy others. It was also suggested that students:

1. Not be overly concerned with grades (USF2 and USF3)
2. Be well prepared before class (KF1)
3. Do their homework (KF4)
4. Be aware that the style of teaching in the U.S. is different than in Korea (S5)
5. Do what the teacher asks (S6)
6. Read textbook assignments before class (KF1)
7. Review material as soon as class is over (KF1)
8. Take advantage of extra credit and make-up opportunities (S2)
9. Try to apply learning to its relevance in Korea (USF3)

**Comparison of responses.** In comparing the responses of the participants in this section, a number of noticeable themes became apparent. When speaking of the need for Korean students to “become American” in the way they study, all participants agreed that this did not need to be the case. However, all students also stated that they felt “pressured” in some way to change the manner in which they study, and all U.S. faculty participants gave instances of at least one way that they tried to change the learning strategies or behavior of Korean students. In addition, half of the students felt that their U.S. instructors tried to get them to see things from an “American point of view,” and two claimed their teachers in the U.S. were not understanding of the way they studied or their cultural viewpoint.

In addition, the majority of participants felt that U.S. professors should not change the way they taught in order to help Korean students. Five of the students also stated they had become more supportive of the “U.S. viewpoint,” and half said their opinion of U.S. politics had changed. While stating that Korean students do not need to “become American” in the way they study is not the same as saying they do not need to change their learning strategies at all, the

apparent pattern of responses to these questions seemed to point to a possible disparity or contradiction between the belief that Korean students should not change their learning strategies and the reality of what is experienced or perceived to be experienced in the educational setting.

Another perceptible difference in responses was the fact that both the student and faculty participants made more suggestions to U.S. faculty about how to help Korean students than they did to Korean students about how to succeed in the U.S. In general, the suggestions given to teachers were also more specific than the suggestions given to the students. Most of the suggestions made by students were to U.S. faculty; they did not give as many suggestions to other Korean students. In addition, most of the students recommended that teachers take their language difficulties into consideration without giving much comment as to how teachers can help improve their English abilities or how students can help themselves. Faculty participants, on the other hand, gave more suggestions to other professors on ways to assist Korean students in bettering their English as well as to Korean students about ways to improve their second language proficiency. A final observation was that for all the suggestions made to both U.S. instructors and Korean students, more were related to the attitude of the individual than to communicative or academic approaches.

### **Impacts of Cross-Cultural Experiences**

The final research question, Research Question Seven, attempted to gauge the impact of the cross-cultural experiences of Korean students at U.S. universities and their professors on all parties involved. In particular, the students and Korean faculty participants were asked if they felt the experience of studying (or teaching in the case of faculty) in the U.S. had affected their “worldviews” and benefited them as individuals. They were also asked to talk about other impressions of America and Americans they had made while living in the country as well as

things they now realized about Korea that they hadn't before coming to the U.S. U.S. faculty were questioned about how the possible impact that teaching Koreans might have had on their "worldviews" in addition to impressions they had made of Korea and Koreans. All of the participants shared at least one impression they had of either U.S. or Korean culture as a result of their cross-cultural experiences in the U.S., and all felt that the experience of working with each other in an educational environment had made some difference in the way they viewed the global community.

**Korean impressions of the U.S.** Near the end of each interview, both student and Korean faculty participants were asked to describe any other impressions, not necessarily related to education, that they had made of the United States, its people, and its culture, as a result of either studying or teaching in the U.S. Many of the impressions shared were related to the way in which Americans interact and communicate with each other. Other comments had to do with Americans' view of the world and the "pace" of life in the U.S.

Four of the student participants (S2, S3, S4, and S6) felt that, for the most part, the Americans they had met were "friendly" and "open." They also commented on the fact that it is common in the U.S. for people to greet those they don't know. "I think people are very open here," said S4. "In addition, when you make eye contact with someone on the street, unlike in Korea where they ignore you (laughed), people here smile and greet you." He added, "Americans look so big and tough, but inside they are very soft and nice." S3 commented, "In Korea, people are more aware of and sensitive to how others feel or react, but they also aren't as open to people they don't know. In the U.S., people are friendlier, even to those they don't know." It was S6's feeling that although the Americans she'd met were friendly and easy to

become acquainted with, it was also just as easy for Americans to end relationships. She explained this observation by comparing it to social relations in Korea.

In Korea, relationships are very important because we're a smaller country, and people have continuous interactions with each other. Your social circle is very important. But here, it's easier to just stop a relationship and start another. It's not so easy to do that in Korea.

Related to social interaction, S2 and S5 also received impressions about the manner in which Americans "work in teams" and "help each other out." Watching children on a local playground, S5 observed, "I envy the way American children think of others first when they play with each other. I think this is a good part of American culture."

Another observation expressed by participants had to do with Americans' awareness of and attitude towards other countries of the world. Two participants (S1 and KF1) expressed surprise at the lack of awareness many of the Americans they'd met had about other parts of the world, particularly Korea. S1 stated

When I came here and met people directly, I realized there are a lot of people who don't know about South Korea. They know a lot about North Korea – there were a lot of people who asked me if I came from North Korea.

It was KF1's feeling that:

Some American students do not know much about what is happening in other nations. This is the impression I have received. Or they simply think – I am a very lucky person to be born in the U.S. and it's not important because America is the powerful country in the world; it's not necessary to think about what is happening in other countries.

According to KF1, this lack of knowledge or interest in countries outside the U.S. can lead to a type of “close-minded” attitude on the part of some U.S. residents. He said, “. . . after eight, nine years of studying in the United States I feel that some American students have a lack of open mind to others.”

S5 and S6 commented on the “pace of life” in the United States and the manner in which Americans spend their leisure time. Speaking of how her behavior might be different once she returns to Korea, S5 said, “I used to be in a hurry, barging into people in the markets to do grocery shopping quickly, like other Koreans do. As I have learned the ‘beauty of slowness’ in the United States, I will now act differently from normal Koreans.” S6 commented that Korean university students drank more alcohol when they get together than American students did. “Here,” she remarked, “they have more parties in which they just dance and talk.”

Other comments regarding Americans were that some had stereotypes of Asians as being “hard workers” (KF1), some weren’t very “fiscally responsible” (KF2), and that, as a whole, university students in the U.S. were not as “politically active or aware” as Korean university students (KF3).

**Korean impressions of Korea.** The Korean participants, both students and faculty, were asked if they now realized something about Korea or Korean culture that they hadn’t before they came to the United States. Six participants made comments in this regard. S1 reflected

When I was in Korea, I thought Korea was the center of the world. But then I got here and found out that many people don’t even know where Korea is. I think the Korean education system gives us an unreal picture of our place in the world. I think it’s important for Korean students to understand reality and realize how the outside world views us.

S4 said he now realized that, “Korean society is very centered on manner and etiquette. You have to be aware of what others, like teachers and professors, are thinking and feeling. I was very surprised.” Another observation was made by S5, who said

One example is when we’re in Korea, you have to follow along with fashions. If you can’t follow the trends or fashions, you’re considered out-of-fashion. After being here and then going back, I’ve thought again about this fashion trend. I think it’s stupid.

S6 said she now realized how close-knit social relationships in Korea are. She also commented that she hadn’t realized how good the public transportation system in Korea was before coming to America. KF1 remarked on the hurried, competitive nature of Korean society. In his mind, the “let’s go, go, go, go, push, push, push” mentality was common. The last participant to make comments in this area, KF3, also remarked on the “keeping up with the Changs” mindset and said he felt that Korean society was very class conscious.

**American impressions of Korea.** All of the U.S. faculty participants stated that they felt they had learned something about Korea and its people and culture from the Korean students they had taught. Five of the six participants expressed admiration for the Korean students who came to the U.S. to pursue a university degree in a second language and implied this said something about the “character” of the Korean people. USF2 commented on “. . . the courage that it must take to go to a foreign country where the medium of instruction is a language you learned as a foreign language . . .” and said he had been impressed by the “discipline” and the “willingness to work when they’re tired or sick or fed up or busy” of his Korean students.

Speaking of her Korean students, USF1 said

I mean, I have a high regard for all students, that they have studied English and have been able to make it to this point. I realize it’s not a simple, easy thing to get to that point. So

most of them are hard workers, even if it's something they're forced to learn in school or that their parents have pushed them to learn. Still, it takes something to even be conversant in another language much less to even seek a degree in another country in that language. So I have a lot of respect for all the students.

Two faculty members (USF3 and USF5) had received the impression that the Korean people were very hospitable, citing examples of their Korean students inviting them to dinner or even inviting them to stay in their homes if the faculty traveled to Korea in the future. USF5 also talked about how eager or willing some of his Korean students have been to teach him certain aspects of Korean culture. He related the story of one episode that illustrated this point.

In particular, I remember a young woman who would come into my office and always bow to me. And at first when I met her I bowed back, and she bowed again. And she had to teach me the rules, the etiquette, you know, in terms of bowing.

In addition, it was USF6's impression that family ties are important in Korea. In her words, "I think they have very good family relationships. They're always, as far as how they study, I don't think they want to disappoint their families." She went on to share her experience of having the opportunity to meet some of the parents of her students when they come from Korea to see their children graduate.

It's always such a joy to meet their parents and to be able to tell their parents what a good student their child was. And they always thank you, thank you, thank you. And it's always a joy to meet their parents and see, you can just see in their faces how very proud they are of their children.

Two other aspects of Korean culture that USF6 said she had learned from their students were wedding customs and the fact that Korean young men must do mandatory military service.

USF4 said that the quality of Korean products (e.g. cars) said something about national character of the Korean people.

**Benefits from cross-cultural experience.** All of the participants felt that they had benefited from the cross-culture exchange that had occurred from either studying in or teaching Korean students who came to the United States. For students, these benefits included improved English skills, a better understanding of America and Americans, an increased sense of confidence, independence or self-sufficiency, a better awareness of their professional or academic fields, an increase in understanding of other cultures and peoples, and a greater potential to obtain employment in the future. All of the students stated the experience of studying in the U.S. had increased their desire to learn more about and/or travel to other cultures, and five believed the experience would make traveling to or living in other countries easier in the future.

For faculty participants, the most commonly mentioned benefit of the experience of working with Korean students was an increased desire to either travel abroad or learn more about other countries and cultures. While stating that this desire was motivated not only by Korean students but also by other international students in their classrooms, four of the faculty participants believed that having the opportunity to meet and learn from this population had fueled their interest in those cultures. Two of the faculty also stated they felt that having Korean students in their classes made them “better teachers” because it helped them become more aware of the backgrounds of their students.

**Impressions on worldview.** In addition, all of the participants remarked that the opportunity for U.S. and Korean people to interact with one another in a cross-cultural educational setting had had an impact on the way they viewed the world and their role in the

global community. Ten participants (S1, S2, S3, S4, S6, KF4, USF1, USF3, USF5, and USF6) believed that the experience had “broadened” their point of view of others and made them more receptive and accepting as individuals. One participant who expressed this belief was S1, who said of her experience in the U.S., “It has helped me be less narrow-minded. I’ve also learned to be more accepting of other cultures and ways.” S2’s perception was that

My thinking has changed a lot. This is because I’ve had the opportunity to meet people from around the world here; I didn’t have that chance in Korea. I thought of people from other countries in a narrow way, but I think that has improved since I came here.

When asked to sum up the impact of his experience in the U.S. on this thinking, S4 stated, “I think it has broadened my view of the world. People are all the same. Blacks, Whites, whoever. They’re all the same.”

The faculty participants who spoke of this “broadening” of the mind spoke of the impact of the experience on their sensitivity to others and their perceptions of different cultures. USF5 remarked that the experience had “. . . taught me the necessity of being sensitive to other people’s cultural experiences that are very different than my own.” USF3 put it this way:

Globally it has broadened my mind because I’ve learned a lot of these kids’ cultures when they come. And that has helped me a great deal to understand when I look at the world, when I look at the newspaper or read the news . . . I have a better understanding of why someone in Korea would think this way versus why we think the way we do in the United States.

One final comment on how working with students from other countries had impacted him as an individual was made by KF3. After working with a group of students from Croatia, he

mentioned the fact that the experience had made him “more curious than before” about other ways of thinking and doing things.

You know, we’re always in search of the ideal students – land of Woebegone, Woebegone U – where students come prepared, do all their readings, and lead the discussion in every class. You know, that would be nice, that’s why that experience probably led me to ask questions of myself. What are other places like? What are other students like? Yeah, I would say it’s given me a very positive view of the role of international education and international programs on college campuses.

**Comparison of responses.** Considering the fact that the Korean participants in this study had all experienced living in the United States whereas none of the U.S. participants had experienced living in Korea, it should not be surprising that more impressions were shared by Koreans about the U.S. than by Americans about Korea. Examining the nature of these comments, it also appeared that the U.S. faculty impressions of Korea were primarily positive whereas the impressions of the Korean participants about the U.S. could be construed as a mixture of positive and negative. In many cases, it also appeared that many of the comments made by the Korean students and faculty members about Korean society and culture were negative in nature.

**Divergent responses.** When reflecting on the impact of the cross-cultural experience on participants, there seemed to be much agreement about the benefits of the experience. One notable exception was in the responses to the question to students about whether or not living in the U.S. would make living in another country in the future easier. As opposed to the other students, S6, an undergraduate, stated that she didn’t feel it would help. When asked the reason for this, she said

I've become comfortable living here, but if I go to another country I still have to know another language and another culture. So I'm not sure living here will make living in another country easier. Actually, now that I know all the things I had to go through when adjusting to life here, it worries me to think about having to go through that again.

### **Unexpected Results**

In speaking of one of the fundamental distinctions of qualitative studies, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) write

As a qualitative researcher planning to develop some kind of theory about what you have been studying, the direction you will travel comes after you have been collecting the data, after you have spent time with your subjects. You are not putting together a puzzle whose picture you already know. (p. 6)

This observation implies that some of the findings discovered in qualitative studies, this one included, may not "fit into" certain patterns or may in fact be unanticipated. In this study, several of the perceptions expressed were of this nature.

One unexpected finding of this study related to the experiences of the third group of participants, the Korean faculty. In addition to expressing their opinions about the research questions, these participants shared information about their experiences as immigrants to the United States and, in particular, as professors in U.S. institutions of higher education. A research study examining the experiences Korean faculty members of U.S. institutions of higher education would shed further light on the observations made by the Korean participants in this study. Three of these participants spoke of the challenge of using English, their second language, to teach English native speakers. Two spoke of the difficulty they sometimes had adjusting to the attitude and behavior of some U.S. students and even their colleagues. Another participant

also mentioned how living and studying in both countries had given him a unique perspective and allowed him to see both sides of issues involving the U.S. and Korea. For example, when comparing both education systems, he said, “I think that experiencing both, like a combination of Korean undergraduate program and U.S. graduate programs, I think that’s a good thing.” He added that he hoped his son, who was living in the U.S., had the opportunity to return to Korea to learn more about Korean culture. Another Korean faculty participant spoke of the impact that living many years in the U.S. had had on him.

After about 19 years living in the States, I don’t call myself American. But I have become Americanized in my thinking process. The way that I see certain things is not the same that I used to see it, and also age may be a factor . . . but living almost half of my life in the United States made me a lot more westernized or Americanized.

This individual went on to say that teaching students from a variety of backgrounds in the U.S. had changed his thinking of others.

After teaching for seven years and after interacting with students in a classroom setting, one thing I realize is that I have enlarged or I now have the various perspectives of thinking or the judging others. . . I think that the main thing, or probably the best thing that happened to me, is to not become stereotyped. Yeah, I would say that. Open-minded.

Some of the distinctions and differences between Koreans themselves were also mentioned by another Korean faculty member. This individual explained

Most people don’t realize this – there are ‘Korean Koreans,’ who live in Korea, and there are immigrants, the *Kyo-po*’s (Korean/Americans), right? And then you got the international students in the middle. But to people who don’t know this all Koreans are

Koreans. The relevancies and concerns of Korean Americans are pretty different from Koreans and the immigrants who come here. That Korean American identity is also stratified by class because you got the merchants and then you got the people who work for the merchants like my parents used to, so there are a lot of nuances that go on in the immigrant society.

This participant, who had lived in the U.S. since childhood, went on to speak passionately about some of his feelings about the “Korean international students” when he was a university student himself. “I’m not sure how class translates into international students,” he said. “I’m sure there are levels. But that level, that minimum level in an international student was exponentially higher than the Korean immigrants.” Speaking of how he struggled to make it financially as a university student, how he worked several jobs to be able to afford school, he talked about his resentment of the Korean students who “. . . were driving around in a Lexus, BMW, or something like that.” That resentment built up to such a degree, he reported, that “I would go out of my way to be unkind to international students if they asked for help with papers and stuff (sic).”

Two of the Korean faculty members also spoke about what they perceived to be the negative effects of an “overemphasis” on education in Korea. While this study looked at social influences on education, it did not specifically examine how attitudes about education impacted society. Speaking of the early age at which some parents go as far as to send their children overseas so they can learn English, one of the participants said, “You know, later in life that’s got to lead to a lot of social problems.” He continued

When you’re at a certain age, let’s say up to the age of 12, 14, 15, most of your learning, socialization occurs in the home, not with a foreign family. The concept of family is

going to be eroded, you know, traditional Korean bonds that everyone takes so much for granted. You know, that's ultimately going to decline as a result of this process.

Other unexpected findings emerged from observations made by U.S. faculty participants. Some of these were related to perceptions about their Korean or other "non-U.S." colleagues. Two U.S. faculty participants stated that, in their opinions, "international professors" were often "stricter" with international students than were U.S.-born professors. One U.S. faculty participant also said he'd observed that some of the same communicative and behavioral styles of Korean students were evident in one of his Korean colleagues. Another recalled that one of his former Korean colleagues often got complaints from students about his English. When this happened, reported the participant, he told those students, "Well, sit closer to the front and listen."

Finally, a few of the U.S. faculty participants made comments that could be interpreted as displaying a sense of "cultural superiority" or "cultural insensitive." When telling Korean students the importance of speaking in class and emphasizing why they should not be afraid of speaking, one U.S. faculty member reported that he told these students, "This is part of the free world. We allow freedom of speech." The same professor said he told some of the international students:

Copyright in America is human rights. Your country – not you – doesn't believe in human rights so therefore, you have learned that a copyright means nothing. And therefore you continually disregard it, and you can't do that in the United States. We have a great deal of respect for human rights.

Other faculty members suggested that Korean students would naturally want to stay in the United States after they received their degrees, suggesting that there were more jobs in the U.S. than in

their country and even implying that if given the choice, most people would want to reside in the U.S.

### **Conclusion**

A review of the findings of this study indicated that information related to all seven research questions was collected. In some cases, the data pertained to more than one of the research questions. Viewing these findings in light of the literature reviewed and the expectations of this study had implications that enabled the researcher to determine the conclusions and implications of these findings.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

In order to interpret and make conclusions from the data collected in this study as well as answer the study's research questions, it was beneficial to first compare the findings of this study with the findings of other studies of Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education. In addition, analyzing the study's findings in view of the literature reviewed about historical influences on Korean education and traditional learning styles in Korea also sheds light on the answers to the research questions. Finally, filtering the data through the defined processes of cultural adaptation and identifying findings that either supported or opposed the tenets of Border Pedagogy allowed for a deeper understanding of the issues addressed in this study. In the process of analyzing the data for this study, it was found that several of the themes identified seemed interrelated and/or relevant to several of the above areas.

#### **Comparisons with Other Studies**

Some of the themes which emerged in this study were also addressed in other studies about Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education. Findings in this study that appeared in these other studies included those related to students' classroom behavior, use of English as a second language, problems of adaptation, recommendations to U.S. faculty with Korean students, and recommendations to Korean students. It is important to note that many of

the themes addressed in this study were not addressed in the previous studies reviewed, and several of the themes revealed in those studies did not emerge in this study.

**Classroom behavior.** Both the faculty and student participants in studies by Lee and Carrasquillo (2006), Tucker (2003), and Yook and Albert (1998) shared the perception that a lack of oral participation in class was a common trait of Korean students in U.S. universities. This perception also appeared in this study. A lack of oral participation appeared as one of the most common themes that emerged related to the classroom behavior of Korean students. All but one of the participants felt that there is little discussion or oral participation in a typical Korean classroom, and the level of classroom participation was seen by all but three of the participants as the biggest difference between Korean and U.S. university students. Further evidence of this trait appeared when the participants were asked about the differences in learning strategies between Korean and U.S. students. The majority of participants believed that teacher-dependent learning strategies were more common in Korean universities than in U.S. universities. The fact that a lack of oral participation was remarked on by three other studies seemed to confirm the fact that this perception is a common one and provided information related to answering the first three research questions of this study.

One of the other studies reviewed, Lee and Carrasquillo (2006), also mentioned the perception that some Korean students disliked group work in class. While this did not appear as a major finding of the current study, group projects were mentioned as being the *most difficult* and *least helpful* form of class activities by two of the student participants. Due to the lack of comment about this issue, however, it cannot be concluded that this is a common perception.

**English issues.** Moon (1991), Lee and Carrasquillo (2006), and Yang (2004) all made mention of issues related to the usage of English as a Second Language by Korean students in

institutions of higher education in the U.S. All of the participants in this study believed that using English was a difficulty or challenge for this population. Specific areas of English proficiency that were mentioned in both this study and other studies were vocabulary usage, grammar usage, speaking, and writing. While not specifically related to the answering of any of the research questions in this study, this data did provide evidence about an aspect that affected Korean students' performance in the U.S. classroom, an issue addressed in Research Question Three.

**Problems of adaptation.** Several studies (Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Yang, 2004; Yook & Albert, 1998) identified some of the problems and difficulties encountered by Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education that were also identified in this study. These difficulties were related to using English as a Second Language, adjusting to differences in student/teacher relationships, and forming relationships with native English speakers. The most common challenge of Korean students in the U.S. identified by the participants in this study was using English. Specific language skills that were mentioned as challenging were speaking in class, writing, and listening. Respondents in Yang's (2004) study also reported these skills as causing anxiety for Korean students in the U.S., and Moon (1991) stated that one of the difficulties identified was expressing opinions in class, which could have a relationship to the use of English as a Second Language. Moon (1991) also stated that maintaining student/faculty relationships was a difficulty identified in her study; knowing how to interact with American teachers as well as understanding teachers' expectations was listed as challenges of students in this study. In addition, forming relationships and understanding how to interact with American students were reported as difficulties in both this study and by Yang (2004).

**Recommendations to faculty.** Overall, the recommendations made to U.S. faculty who were teaching Korean students by the participants in this study were more numerous and detailed than the suggestions made in the other studies reviewed. Recommendations made in other studies that were also made in this study were using interactive classroom activities (Tucker, 2003), learning the cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds of students (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006), providing opportunities for Korean and U.S. students to learn from and interact with each other (Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Yang, 2004), and having an awareness of the concerns and difficulties of Korean students (Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). The only recommendations that appeared in other studies that were not explicitly mentioned in this study were that instructors make use of teacher modeling in class (Tucker, 2003), provide visual as well as verbal reinforcement of teaching points (Tucker, 2003), and make sure that class materials used and information presented that dealt with Korea are up-to-date and accurate (Yang, 2004).

**Recommendations to students.** Likewise, many more suggestions to Koreans studying in U.S. institutions of higher education were given in this study than in the literature reviewed. Recommendations that were identified in both this and other studies were improving English proficiency (Moon, 1991), asking for help when needed (Yang, 2004), understanding that making mistakes in English is unavoidable (Yang, 2004), speaking English in and out of the classroom (Yang, 2004), and being clear about one's goals for studying in the U.S. (Yang, 2004). The only suggestions to Korean students that appeared in other studies that were not explicitly mentioned in this study were that students learn more about the differences between the U.S. and Korean education systems prior to their arrival in the U.S. (Moon, 1991), approach everyday life in the U.S. and relationships with teachers and other students differently than when they were in

Korea (Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005), develop effective strategies for dealing with anxiety and stress in the U.S. (Yang, 2004), learn about the social and culture norms and values while in the U.S. (Yang, 2004), and understand that having anxiety while living in another country is natural (Yang, 2004).

### **Historical Influences and Traditional Learning Styles**

Although all participants in this study were specifically asked to name cultural, social, political, or historical influences on education in Korea, not many historical influences were identified; the responses made mostly pertained to modern-day influences, particularly political and economic. It is unclear whether the participants responded in this manner because of their lack of awareness of historical influences or the fact that the nature of the questions asked encouraged them to focus on current influences. Of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, only the latter was specifically mentioned as influencing current education in Korea. Two of the Korean faculty participants spoke about the influence that Confucianism still had on relationships between students and teachers and underclassmen and upperclassmen as well as on classroom behavior.

However, several aspects of or issues related to these three belief systems were raised. Related to traditional learning styles, remarks were made that show evidence of the following: the concept of *wu-wei*, collectivism, the concept of *li*, student/teacher relationships, the use of memorization, and standardized testing. A review of these comments in comparison to the literature reviewed shed light on how several of the themes of Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism might affect teaching and learning in Korea even today.

**The concept of *wu-wei*.** Comments made in this study regarding the inclination of Korean students to refrain from participating orally in class and focus on comprehending

teachers' lectures indicated an agreement with previous studies that identified this tendency and seemed to confirm the influence of the traditional concept of *wu-wei*, or non-action, on education in Korea. An integral part of the philosophies of Taosim, and Buddhism, and Confucianism, this notion encourages means of non-verbal communication as well as intuitive ways of learning. Studies by Y. C. Kim (2005), Lee and Carrasquillo (2006), Liu (1996), Moon (1991), Seo and Koro-Ljungberg (2005), Tucker (2003) and Yang (2004) all made mention of the lack of oral participation in Korean classrooms and the emphasis on listening carefully to teachers' lectures; this study confirmed this tendency in several ways. Participants reported the perception that there is very little discussion or oral participation and that a lecture-style approach to teaching was common in Korean classrooms, that listening carefully and absorbing what teachers said was a common learning strategy in Korea, and that it was less common for Korean students to speak or interact in U.S. classrooms than their American counterparts. Although participants did not specifically mention the concept of *wu-wei* and how this might affect the learning styles of Korean students, their remarks could be seen as an indication that this historical, cultural influence might still play a role in shaping the way in which Korean students approach learning.

**Collectivism.** Another common theme evident in the traditional philosophical and religious teachings in Korea is the idea of importance of the group over the individual. The work of Kitayama and Markus (1991) points to the prevalence of an *interdependent self construal* in Asia and studies by Jin (1993), S. J. Kim (2004), S. O. Kim (1983), Sosik and Jung (2002) and Youn (2000) reveal a focus on the collective in Korean schools and educational practices. Although the participants in this study did not comment at length about this tendency (in fact, some of the student participants spoke of their belief that American students work more closely together and help each other more than do students in Korea) several did mention the importance

of the *sam-bae/who-bae* system in Korea, in which students rely on and work with their older schoolmates. This could be seen as evidence that the notion of collectivism is still present in Korean education.

**The concept of *li*.** One common theme of this study was the perception that students in Korea were encouraged to study diligently, have a sincere attitude about their studies, and make the most of their educational opportunities. This was evidenced by the remarks of the participants about the ability of Korean students to study for long periods of time and put effort into their academic work, indications that the Confucian concept of *li* (in Chinese) or *hongik ingan* (in Korean) might still affect the thinking and habits of individuals from that country. This traditional notion, which emphasizes the development of people for the betterment of society, values individual effort, accuracy, and sincerity. Studies that pointed out this tendency in Korean students include those by those by Bembenutty (2007) and Youn (2000). In this study, the impression that Korean students are familiar with long periods of concentrated study and that many are “hard working,” “motivated,” and submit “quality academic work” was an indication that *li* might still have an effect on the mindset and attitude of this population.

**Student/teacher relationships.** There was much evidence in this study that traditional notions about the relationship between students and teachers in Korea, as influenced by Confucianism in particular, still impacted the way students deal with their instructors and vice versa. According to Huh (2004), Shin and Koh (2005), and Youn (2000), the historical view of teachers in Korea has been as figures of authority who were to be listened to and respected. The belief that Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education often tended to view their instructors as “absolute authorities” was discussed in five studies (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yang, 2004; Yook & Albert, 1998) and was mentioned

by seven of the participants of this study as being characteristic of the relationship between Korean students and their teachers. One participant specifically mentioned how the historical view of teachers in Korea is still common in Korea. In addition, several of the participants listed the “formality” between Korean students and their instructors as being different than the “informality” that shaped relationships between students and teachers in the U.S. and commented on the “strict methods of discipline and punishment” they felt were used by Korean teachers.

**Use of memorization.** According to Greer and Ng (2000) and Tweed and Lehman (2002), an acquisition-based approach to learning has been advocated in Confucian schools of thought. This has led, believe Crane (1978), Cumings (2005), Y. H. Kim (1999), J. K. Lee (2002), and Shin and Koh (2005), to an emphasis on rote memorization in the Korean educational system. Seven participants in this study listed the ability to memorize as being a typical learning strategy in Korea, a finding that suggests this traditional learning strategy is still commonly used or at least was for the formative years of this age group.

**Standardized testing.** An emphasis on standardized assessment has been another common characteristic of the Korean education system since the time of the Koguryo and Silla dynasties, and there is evidence not only in this study but in several others that this practice remains intact. An example of the importance of standardized examinations, report several researchers and educators (Baker, 1996; Diem et al., 1997; Y. H. Kim, 1999, Seth, 2005; Shin & Koh, 2005), is the nationalized college entrance examinations. Studies of Korean students in U.S. universities (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006; Moon, 1991; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tucker, 2003; Yang, 2004) have also indicated that this type of testing is still prevalent. The findings of this study seemed to agree with this assessment. Participants felt that standardized tests were an integral part of the Korean education system, that the use of these tests was a common teaching

strategy in Korea, and that strategies aimed at succeeding on this type of assessment were commonly used by Korean students.

### **Processes of Cultural Adaptation**

A review of the findings of this study related to Research Questions Five and Six suggested that both assimilation and acculturation, the two main processes of cultural adaptation looked at in this study, were perceived to be involved in the experiences of Korean students at U.S. institutions of higher education. In other words, the student and faculty participants identified several themes that seemed to indicate the process of assimilation and the process of acculturation were both taking place, at different times and in varying degrees, in the cross-cultural exchanges that happened between students and faculty. In addition, there was evidence that the process of enculturation was also occurring.

Since this conclusion was based on the perceptions and opinions of the participants about their personal experiences and not on an explicit discussion or identification of these two processes, it is important to keep in mind that this conclusion was based on the researcher's interpretation of the definitions of assimilation and acculturation and the activities or events that were illustrative of each of these processes. It is also important to consider that the distinctions between the two processes were not always clear-cut or identifiable, that at times, the processes seemed interrelated, and that many of the participants did not seem to interpret experiences as totally supportive of one process or the other. Often, it appeared as if the two processes were almost vying or jockeying with each other for prominence, and it was not clear, in the final analysis, which process "had the upper hand." At other times, it felt as if the assimilation and acculturation had a *yin-yang* relationship, as though they "needed each other" to exist. Sometimes, participants seemed to contradict themselves in terms of what process they

supported and what process they actually practiced. For example, one particular participant might identify an educational practice that appeared illustrative of the process of assimilation yet state a preference for the process of acculturation. Another would make statements that seemed supportive of the assimilation of Korean students then describe teaching strategies he or she used that appeared to help students acculturate. Disentangling the processes as they came into play in the experiences and minds of the participants reemphasized the complex nature of the forces involved in cross-cultural interaction.

**Assimilation.** In this study, “assimilation” was interpreted as a *one-way process* in which a person’s cultural views are supplanted by those of another culture in a manner that results in the *complete absorption* of the individual into that new culture (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999; M. S. Kim, 2002). As Feinberg and Soltis (2004) state, “Assimilation refers to a process whereby one group, usually a subordinate one, becomes indistinguishable from another group, usually the dominant one” (p. 25). Educational practices and factors that appeared in this study which were seen as supportive of the process of assimilation were those that appeared to facilitate hegemony, pressure students to *supplant* previously held cultural views or practices with those represented by the host culture, discourage the cultural practices of non-native students, demonstrate a lack of awareness on the part of students of forces which might influence their educational experiences in the U.S., and promote the view of the home culture over other cultures.

In the words of deMarrais and LeCompte (1999), “*Hegemony* refers to a social consensus created by dominant groups who control socializing institutions such as the media, schools, churches, and the political system; these institutions prevent alternative views from gaining an audience or establishing their legitimacy” (p. 17). If the process of hegemony is taking place in

schools or educational practices, this implies that the cultural values of the minority are being disrespected or suppressed in a manner that *oppresses* that group (Freire, 1970/2003; Gramsci, 1929/ 1992). One theme that emerged in this study which seemed to indicate that the process of hegemony might be taking place in the educational experiences of the Korean students in this study was the perception by four participants that schools in the U.S. were run in a corporate manner and that the job of schools was functional, that is, to train students for future employment. Another indication of this trend was the fact that five participants stated the belief that economics and businesses played a role in what transpires in institutions of higher education in the U.S. If this is the case, it is possible that the agendas and attitudes of U.S. corporations and economic policies are influencing the educational experiences that university students, including Korean students on F-1 visas, are having. Other signs that suggested Korean students in the U.S. were exposed to influences of a hegemonic nature was the fact that half of the student participants believed that their U.S. professors “tried to get them to see things from a U.S. point of view.” A final indication that more than just academic learning was a result of the students’ educational experiences in the U.S. was the fact that five of the students felt they had become more supportive of the “U.S. viewpoint” and four of the students stated that their opinions of U.S. politics had changed because of their time in America. This could suggest that U.S. institutions of higher education are playing a role in shaping the opinions and views of the students in a manner which could be more supportive to the dominant point of view.

In some cases, the student participants felt that they were being “pressured” by their U.S. instructors to change their way of learning and thinking, a practice which suggested students were being encouraged to give up their cultural viewpoints and behavior and to assimilate into the new culture. All of the student participants stated that they felt at least one type of pressure

to “become American” in the way they studied. One of these students noted that this pressure might have not even have been a direct attempt on the part of anyone to encourage change but more of a feeling that emerged after observing the practices of students and teachers in the U.S. After commenting that she felt the need to change her way of thinking and acting in the U.S., this student added, “No one has really pressured me to do this – I have just felt this pressure by observing others here.” This remark pointed to the importance of understanding both direct and indirect influences that might make those in subordinate cultures feel obliged to adopt the practices of the dominant culture without a deliberate or even conscious consideration of the ramifications of this action.

Other indications that a pressure for Korean students to change existed were the facts that all U.S. faculty participants gave at least one example of a way in which they attempted to change the behavior and habits of their Korean students, and the majority of participants felt that U.S. faculty should not change the manner in which they teach to help the Korean students in their classes. Two of the students also believed their U.S. instructors were not supportive of Korean students’ “cultural point of view.” While these responses are certainly indications that a certain pressure to assimilate on the part of students is perceived to be taking place, it is important to remember that pressure for the students to change and a lack of willingness on the part of instructors to change does not necessarily mean that students are being encouraged to give up previously held cultural values and behavior.

In addition, several of the remarks by the faculty participants could be construed as discouraging the cultural practices of Korean students. Two of the Korean faculty members pointed out the importance of the traditional *sam-bae/who-bae* system in Korea in which younger university students are expected to respect and be mentored by older students attending

their schools. In this case, there is an expectation that the students spend time with and depend on each other outside of the classroom. In fact, one of the Korean faculty participants spoke about how important and beneficial this relationship when he was a university student. The fact that five of the faculty participants suggested that Korean students in the U.S. not spend much time with other Koreans might be seen as opposition to this practice. While it was assumed that the suggestion to not “hang out with” other Koreans was meant as advice which would provide more opportunities for students to practice their English and become familiar with other cultures, it is also understandable how Korean students might find it difficult to break from the tradition of socializing with and depending on their fellow expatriates.

Another theme which emerged that seemed to support the notion that assimilation might be taking place for the student participants was the fact that only one of the student participants identified any cultural, historical, political, social or economic influences on education in the U.S. This lack of awareness of these influences could be interpreted as meaning that students did not know or care about forces that might shape their experiences and influence their thinking while in the United States and that, as Freire (1970/2003) would maintain, a *demystification* of the educational process was needed for these individuals. The students were able to share their perceptions about several trends and common practices in U.S. institutions of higher education but, even though specifically asked to do so, were unable or unwilling to hypothesize about why these trends and practices had come into existence or name any influences that might have led to these trends and practices. Whether this lack of comment on the influences on the educational experiences they were receiving in the United States was a result of a lack of interest (as one student said, “I’m just busy concentrating on my studies”), a lack of awareness, or a hesitancy to speak about this matter cannot be determined. If a lack of interest or awareness was the case,

this is an indication that the process of assimilating might be occurring. Without knowing forces that could be pressuring one to *blindly conform* to the dominant way of thinking and acting, it is unlikely that the individual will have the insight or feel the need to resist those forces.

Conversely, in order for acculturation to take place, a consciousness of the forces on which the education system of the dominant culture is founded and exists is an important first step.

Finally, several comments made by U.S. faculty participants could be interpreted as disparaging the viewpoint of other cultures and promoting the viewpoint of the United States. The remarks made by one faculty member which implied that other countries do not value human rights or freedom of speech as much as Americans do and the comment by another that suggested everyone, given the choice, would prefer to live in the U.S. might be seen as indirect means of supporting the assimilation of non-native students. One way of encouraging those in a subordinate position to adopt a dominant point of view is to promote the attractiveness of the dominant culture while disparaging the subordinate culture.

**Acculturation.** “Acculturation,” as defined in this study, aims at enabling those going through a cross-cultural experience to maintain their previously held cultural perspectives while *borrowing* or *adapting* certain aspects of the new culture (Gollnick & Chinn, 1990; Hong et al., 2000; Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999; M. S. Kim, 2002; Pai et al., 2006). In this case, the process of adaptation is multifaceted and takes place with the assumption that the individual modifies but does not necessarily replace pre-existing cultural behaviors and attitudes. Educational practices and factors which appeared in this study that were seen as supportive of the process of acculturation were those that appeared to empower individuals, promote dialogue between teachers and students, and incorporate multiple cultural views into the learning process.

Based on the responses of the participants in this study, there were several indications that the empowerment of both students and faculty involved in the educational process was being attempted. To begin with, the fact that all participants believed Korean university students in the U.S. did not need to “become American” in the way they studied, that most student participants felt they could be successful students in the U.S. without having to make major changes in the way they studied, and that only one of the students said she felt “less Korean” after having lived and studied in the U.S. suggested that the students did not feel the need to disregard or disperse with behaviors they were accustomed to and could study in the U.S. without having to “do things the American way.” This implied that students believed they could utilize previously held skills and habits and have successful experiences in the U.S., a sign that they felt empowered to “be who they were.” In addition, four of the students stated that their U.S. teachers were supportive of their cultural viewpoints to some degree.

Other themes which appeared to promote the empowerment of individuals were related to specific teaching and learning strategies suggested by both student and faculty participants which aimed at “giving students a voice” in their classes and enhancing the quality of their educational experiences. Specific activities of this nature were those which sought to allow Korean students to engage in classroom activities, improve their second language skills, build relationships with professors and others students, identify and use campus and community resources, and increase their levels of motivation and confidence.

Teaching strategies that appeared to be particularly empowering were those which provided Korean students opportunities to

1. apply learning to their own cultural context, either in class discussions, through writing assignments, or on exams;

2. share various aspects of themselves and their country with others through presentations, discussions, or group work;
3. interact with and get to know other students and teachers;
4. become comfortable with and confident in the learning environment by having cultural and academic rules clearly explained and campus and community resources pointed out to them;
5. feel as if their contribution to the learning process is valued and that they as individuals are accepted;
6. succeed academically;
7. become aware of and encouraged to use strengths they might have developed in Korea (e.g., the ability to study for long periods of time, the ability to memorize facts and do well on standardized exams);
8. occasionally put in the role of “mentor” for other students who are struggling (e.g., tutoring in math)
9. make progress in their use of English as a Second Language.

Learning strategies which seemed to be aimed at the empowerment of students were those that allowed them to

1. improve their ability to use English as a Second Language;
2. succeed academically;
3. ask for help from teachers and classmates;
4. interact with other students, teachers, and community members;
5. get involved with campus and community activities and programs;
6. use the strengths they developed in Korea;

7. develop self-awareness;
8. put learning into the context of their individual goals.

It should be remembered that for Giroux (2005) the notion of empowerment applies to all parties in the educational process. As teachers work with their students in an atmosphere of mutual respect, they become enlightened and invigorated along with their students. The fact that several of the U.S. faculty participants commented on the fact that they had learned several things about Korean culture from their students and that their “worldviews” had expanded as a result of their experiences with these students was a sign that teachers were being empowered as well.

The findings also reflected the fact that attempts were made on the part of U.S. faculty to promote dialogue between themselves and their students, which could be seen as one way of endorsing or advancing the process of acculturation. A recommendation the participants gave to faculty was that they show an interest in and get to know the Korean students in their classes by asking them questions, inviting them to visit during office hours, and designing classroom activities that would enable these students to share information about their backgrounds and cultural perspectives. There was also the feeling that U.S. faculty should make an effort to initiate this relationship given the perceived *cultural constraints* the students might be under. It was also suggested that faculty be patient, caring, and encouraging when dealing with students. Finally, the suggestion that faculty make an attempt to facilitate interaction between Korean and non-Korean students in their courses through group work or pair work could be seen as another means of promoting cross-cultural dialogue and encouraging acculturation.

Related to the promotion of dialogue was the incorporation of multiple perspectives in the learning process. When students and teachers are engaged in true dialogue, they break down barriers and learn from each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The participants of this

study identified several ways in which Korean students could share information about their culture with others as well as put learning in a cultural context. Faculty participants specifically mentioned teaching strategies they used that required Korean students to not only learn course content but also make sense of that content within the framework of Korean culture. Some of these strategies involved asking questions in class discussions or on essay exams that required students to think about the relevance of class material in other countries, giving research paper assignments which allowed students to investigate and write about issues related to different cultures, and designing class projects which allowed students to share information about other cultures with students. They also spoke of ways that the presence of Koreans in the classroom could be used as a means of developing the cross-cultural awareness and diversity coping skills of U.S. students.

**Enculturation.** The final process of cultural adaptation mentioned in this study, “enculturation,” is defined by Pai et al. (2006) as “the process of learning one’s own culture” (p. 39). There was evidence that pointed to the fact that this process was taking place for some of the student participants in this study. When the students were asked if there was anything they had learned or realized about their own country since coming to the United States, they were able to identify seven specific realizations they had made. These realizations were related to not only the Korean education system but also interpersonal relationships, political awareness, fashion and class-consciousness, and social competitiveness. This is an indication that the experience of studying in a new culture allows individuals the opportunity to learn new things about their home culture. Although the effect that cross-cultural experiences have on the process of enculturation was not a focus of this study, the above comments suggest that further research in this area might be warranted.

### **Tenets of Border Pedagogy**

Examining the experiences and perspectives of this study's participants through the lens of the main premises of Giroux's (2005) theory of border pedagogy is an essential aspect of answering the research questions of this study. Are the parties involved participants in a process that, in the words of Giroux, encourages them to "... cross ideological and political borders as a way of furthering the limits of their understanding" or are they merely being "... infused with the suffocating smugness of a certain political correctness" (p. 25)? Is the educational experience Koreans students are receiving in U.S. universities one that transforms and emancipates or one that exposes them to a *hidden curriculum* (Feinberg & Soltis, 2004) which attempts to subject or marginalize? Do the instructors of these students assist with the crossing of borders or are they simply gate-keepers and proponents of a dominant culture?

Just as the findings of this study seemed to indicate the presence of both assimilation and acculturation in the experiences of the participants, there was also evidence that some of the tenets of Giroux's (2005) border pedagogy were being adhered to by both teachers and students in this study while others were not. Identifying themes of the study that pertained to each of the following principles of border pedagogy provided some illumination in this regard: recognition of the forces of hegemony, empowerment, promotion of democratic societies, identification of the role of culture, facilitation of dialogue, and incorporation of other worldviews.

**Recognition of forces of hegemony.** Giroux (2005) writes that within the framework of border pedagogy

Students cross over into realms of meaning, maps of knowledge, social relations, and values that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations

that organize them becomes destabilized and reshaped. Border pedagogy decenters as it remaps. (p. 22)

In other words, he continues, “Border pedagogy extends the meaning and importance of demystification as a central pedagogical task” (Giroux, 2005, p. 22). Recognizing forces that might oppress or promote hegemonic forces is a first step in this process. Without an awareness of the influences and agendas of an educational system or practice, it is difficult for individuals to “break free” from conservative trends and explore new worlds.

An examination of the experiences and perspectives shared by the participants of this study seemed to indicate that not much *demystification* was taking place. Although several U.S. faculty members spoke of the economic and political forces that shaped and influenced universities in their country and even went so far as to talk about the way this impacted their role as educators in what they perceived as negative ways, none gave examples of strategies they used to help their students or even other faculty become aware of or resist these influences. While there was no indication that faculty members were deliberately attempting to hide cultural, social, political, economic, religious, or other influences that might be contributing to the transmission of the dominant culture’s values via U.S. higher education, the faculty participants’ lack of comment about ways in which they worked with students to unveil such influences was revealing. Though it could be said that enhancing the critical thinking skills of students, which some of the faculty maintained they attempted to do in their classes, is one way of enabling students to become more aware of possible forms of hegemony, there was no explicit comment from the faculty about this linkage.

In addition, the fact that only one of the students named a cultural, historical, political, economic or social influence on education in the United States is another indication that the

students are not being consciously made aware of or reflecting on some of the forces that were shaping their experiences and perhaps indirectly forming their opinions or guiding their decisions. This is especially notable because of the fact that the students *were* able to name several influences on Korean education. When asked to explain the reason for a particular educational practice in the U.S., the students either admitted they did not know or answered that the practice merely had come about because of U.S. customs or traditions; they did not specify which customs or traditions were involved. Even if U.S. faculty were attempting to help students become more *enlightened* in this regard, the student participants' responses suggest that this message is not being heard and that more reflection is needed.

In the end, most of the students stated that they now had a more positive impression of the U.S. point of view and that they had changed their opinion of U.S. politics. Whether this change in impressions and opinions was a direct result of a process of *indoctrination* or whether this resulted from forces of *enlightenment* cannot be determined by this study; however, it was clear that the students did not appear to be aware of forces which might have influenced this shift.

**Empowerment.** As indicated in the discussion of acculturation, there was evidence which appeared to show that attempts were being made to empower individuals involved in this study. For Giroux (2005), empowerment:

. . . means providing students with the skills they will need to locate themselves in history, find their own voices, and provide the convictions and compassion necessary for exercising civic courage, taking risks, and furthering the habits, customs, and social relations that are essential to democratic public forms. (p. 67)

By providing opportunities for Korean students to share information about themselves and their culture with others, challenging them to examine class material in a manner that was relevant to

their individual situations, encouraging them to find ways to express themselves, persuading them to utilize the strengths they brought with them, and challenging them to apply their learning for the betterment of themselves and others, most of the U.S. faculty interviewed seemed to be promoting the empowerment of their Korean students. Whether these attempts were intentionally aimed at or actually resulted in empowering students was unclear, but the fact that most students expressed the opinion that their time in the U.S. had benefited them academically, professionally and personally might be seen as one indication that they felt more empowered.

**Promotion of democracy.** For Giroux (2005), meaningful education does not stop with the betterment of individuals; it leads to the creation of democratic and just societies. “This means providing students with the opportunity to develop the critical capacity to challenge and transform existing social and political forms, rather than simply adapt to them,” he writes (p. 66). Other than the fact that both students and faculty stated the belief that their experiences had given them a more positive view of cross-cultural interactions and increased their interest in learning about other perspectives, there was little evidence in this study that directly pointed to the fact that the participants were more interested in or capable of transforming society and overcoming injustice in the future. Certainly the fact that there seemed to be little *demytification* taking place and that students appeared unaware of influences on their educational experiences in the U.S. was an indication that it cannot be presumed they would be motivated to fight for changes in the status quo. While this study provided no evidence that suggested this would be the case, it should be recognized that at some point in the future the participants of this might be inclined to battle forces of oppression as a result of their cross-cultural experiences.

**Identification of role of culture.** In order to truly understand educational experiences, Giroux (2005) also maintains the importance of recognizing the role that culture “as a shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders” plays in those experiences (p. 24). He explains, “Within the pedagogical cultural borderland known as school, subordinate cultures push against and permeate the alleged unproblematic and homogeneous borders of dominant cultural forms and practices” (p. 24). Given this interpretation, a recognition of culture as it pertains to education not only involves understanding the historical influences on education but also implies the need for *new cultures to be created* when subordinate and dominant cultures interact.

In terms of recognizing several of the defined cultural influences on teaching and learning, the participants in this study were able to identify a few ways in which history, politics, society, and economics affected education in their home countries, but there was little acknowledgement of a deep understanding of the influences in each others’ cultures. The one exception to this was perhaps on the part of the Korean faculty members, who seemed most adept at identifying influences in both cultures due to their long-term exposure to both education systems as both students and teachers. Whereas the students spoke about influences on Korean education and U.S. faculty participants talked about influences on U.S. education, a review of the Korean faculty members’ responses indicated that they identified an equal number of influences on both systems.

Moreover, there was little articulation of how the interaction between the Korean and U.S. cultures had helped the individual participants *create culture* in the manner endorsed by Border Pedagogy other than the mention by some of the students that they felt somehow “changed” by their experience in the U.S. The changes mentioned were primarily related to more self-awareness and confidence, an enhanced sensitivity and awareness of other cultures, and an

increased desire to learn about different countries and peoples; they did not specify exactly how their experience helped bring to light ways in which Korean and U.S. cultures intersected and synthesized in a manner that enabled them to construct new meaning and achieve greater self-actualization. Again, because of the fact that there seemed to be no specific attempt on the part of the participants to identify the power structures that influence education and possibly lead to hegemony, it should not be surprising that an in-depth awareness and discussion of how culture affects the educational process did not emerge among the themes of this study. It should be recognized, however, that more in-depth questions about this issue might have helped bring more awareness on the part of the participants to the surface.

**Facilitation of dialogue.** When speaking of the role of teachers in taking part in educational experiences inspired by the premises of border pedagogy, Giroux (2005) writes:

By being able to listen critically to the voices of their students, teachers also become border-crossers through their ability both to make different narratives available to themselves and to legitimate difference as a basic condition for understanding the limits of one's own knowledge. (p. 27)

The ability for teachers to cross borders along with their students implies the need for true dialogue between all parties in the educational process. As opposed to instructors who see their roles as transmitters of knowledge, teachers inspired by the principles of border pedagogy view themselves as facilitators of a democratic learning process in which they learn with and are empowered alongside their students. This requires attempts on the part of the teacher to dispose of traditional teacher-student constructs, initiate meaningful communication within the classroom, and follow the flow of learning wherever it may lead.

As the discussion on acculturation indicated, this study provided several examples where participants espoused principles of the promotion of dialogue between teachers and students. This included recommendations that faculty take the time to learn and about their Korean students and develop ways of help these individuals share information about themselves and their cultures both in and out of the classroom. Overall, the student participants expressed appreciation for those professors who took the time to get to know and encourage them, and the faculty participants expressed the belief that learning from their Korean students was both important and appreciated. There seemed to be an awareness that the communication between teachers and students should be endowed with sincerity and mutual respect for the relationship to be beneficial to both parties.

**Incorporation of other worldviews.** One final proposition of Giroux's (2005) border pedagogy is that it allows for the incorporation of various viewpoints and perspectives, not just those representing the dominant culture. Speaking of educators, he states, "They must not only hear the voices of those students who have been traditionally silenced, they must take seriously what all students say by engaging the implications of their discourse in broader historical and relational terms" (p. 25). Again, there were indications that the participants of this study at least supported the idea of teaching and learning strategies aimed at achieving this end and pointed out ways that the experiences of Korean students could be shared in a manner that benefited the class as a whole. Examples of this can be found in class projects that facilitated an increased awareness of non-U.S. cultures, promoted diversity coping skills, and enhanced globalized thinking.

## **Other Conclusions**

The first two research questions of this study were aimed at identifying how the participants viewed both the Korean and U.S. educational systems and teaching and learning strategies common in both countries as being influenced by culture. The third research question asked about cultural differences between Korea and the U.S. that had an impact on Korean students' performance and behavior in and attitudes about their classes in the U.S. While the participants shared their perceptions about many of the characteristics, practices, trends, and differences between the two systems and strategies associated with both, they struggled to connect these to cultural influences. In other words, they identified their impressions of Korean and U.S. schools and how students and teachers typically approach learning and teaching, but could or did not name many of the cultural forces that might have been responsible for those perceived factors other than a few current influences mostly related to economics and politics in their own countries (i.e., students for Korean education and U.S. faculty for U.S. education). An example of this can be found in the response of one student participant who remarked that the reason Korean students often hesitated to speak in class was because of Korean culture. When asked how Korean culture influenced this tendency, the student replied that this tendency simply *was* Korean culture. It appeared difficult for participants to go beyond observed practices and think of the possible causes for those practices. Whether this lack of elaboration on their part about these cultural influences is a reflection of their unawareness of the influences or a result of the specific questions that were asked during the interviews is uncertain, however.

Research Question 4 asked if there were any identifiable changes in the approaches students took to learning during the course of their studies in the U.S. In answer to this question, the students were able to identify a few changes in their own approaches but none appeared to

consider these changes “major.” Most students seemed to feel the approach they took to learning in Korea was also applicable in the U.S. The faculty participants, on the other hand, did not mention many changes they had observed in their Korean students other than the fact that some students spoke more in class near the end of a particular semester than they did when the semester began. Even though the instructors had more of an objective vantage point from which to notice changes in their students’ approaches to learning, it is also understandable that the instructors were less aware of these changes due to the fact that their contact with students might have been limited to one class in one semester.

Key issues being investigated in this study were related to which teaching and learning strategies were associated with the processes of assimilation and acculturation and which of these strategies were actually used by students and teachers, issues that the fifth and sixth research questions attempted to deal with. The answers to these questions also had relevance as to whether or not the participants were supportive of the principles of border pedagogy. In several ways, the participants expressed support for strategies that could be associated with the process of acculturation and the tenets of border pedagogy. These included strategies that attempted to empower students, promote dialogue between teachers and students, and incorporate other world views into classroom learning. On the other hand, other strategies named by the participants might be considered supportive of the process of assimilation, and there was little evidence that the strategies used by participants aimed at demystifying the educational process, uncovering the role that culture plays in teaching and learning, and promoting the democratization of societies.

The one research question in which the participants' responses were fairly unanimous was the seventh research question. When asked if their cross-cultural experiences helped them better understand and deal with the current global environment all of the participants responded in the affirmative. In addition, they listed a number of professional, academic, and personal ways in which they had benefited from the experience. This could be seen as an endorsement of cross-cultural exchanges and international education initiatives as a means of preparing individuals to deal with the postmodern global environment.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study have practical implications not only for Korean men and women who come to the United States to pursue degrees in higher education as well as their instructors but also for individuals involved in other types of intercultural exchange, all those interested in examining the role that culture plays in shaping beliefs, values, and experiences, and teachers, educational administrators, and curriculum designers attempting to create meaningful learning experiences for their students within the complexities of today's interconnected world.

For Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education, the perceptions and opinions shared by the participants of this study shed light on issues that might be encountered and difficulties that can possibly be avoided as well as provide guidelines and advice on ways to get the most out of their experiences while becoming aware of themselves, their cultural backgrounds, and their respective roles in the global community. In particular, the findings highlight several perceived characteristics of education in Korea and the United States; this information can be used to increase the awareness of and likelihood of success for those attempting to study in one or the other country. The study also identifies several strategies that

build on the strengths students bring with them from Korea and suggests ways in which these students can adapt to the U.S. and learn from those they encounter in a manner that both enlightens and empowers. It is hoped that the results of this study will also encourage students to thoughtfully consider the cultural and social context in which their educational experiences are taking place, to discriminate between influences that might have *hidden agendas* and those that promote true democratic exchanges, to use their experiences to further meaningful cross-cultural awareness and understanding, and to come away from the experience with enhanced *global insight*.

For U.S. university faculty who have Korean students in their classes, this study provides illumination into some of the circumstances, perspectives, and challenges of those students, reveals several of the historical and cultural issues that might affect classroom learning, and presents a means for educators to reexamine and enhance their roles as facilitators of successful border crossings. There is much in this study, particularly in the recommended strategies for both teachers and students, that can increase the ability of educators to provide enlightenment, self-actualization, and motivation to all learners, no matter what their cultural backgrounds. Several teaching strategies identified appear to promote the process of acculturation and enable both students and teachers to learn from and with each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The study also highlights the need for educators to not only become much more aware of the influences on higher education in the U.S. but also create everyday learning activities that enable students to become more aware.

Finally, of particular importance to those interested in promoting the process of acculturation and principles of border pedagogy is the finding that several of the teaching strategies and practices identified seemed to be of an assimilative nature. Furthermore, there

were indications that not much work was being done in the area of *opening the eyes* of students and teachers to the possible hegemonic influences on education both in the United States and in Korea. This stands as a challenge to all educators concerned with helping their students create new cultures and identifies forged from the *unveiling* of forces that might hold them down.

Understanding the need to *demystify* the educational process and empower individuals is crucial, but how exactly do educators meet this challenge? What techniques and methodologies can be employed to assist both students and teachers in accomplishing this goal? How do teachers in particular facilitate learning experiences that not increase the awareness of potentially oppressive forces but also mobilize students to resist those forces without becoming “oppressors” themselves? Freire’s (1970/2003) work with illiterate sugarcane workers in Brazil provides some clarity in this regard. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/2003), the well-known South American educator and activist described a pedagogical strategy use to help these adults learn to read and right as well become more aware of and resist institutions and practices that were established by those in positions of power in society. The goal of the teacher in this case, states Freire (1970/2003) is to present themes related to learning “. . . not as a lecture, but as a problem” (p. 109).

The first step of educators, maintains Freire (1970/2003), is to act “. . . as sympathetic observers with an attitude of understanding towards what they see” (p. 110). Before teachers can begin to understand the *reality* of their students and help them with interpreting that and other realities, attempts must be made to get to know students to the greatest degree possible, to try to understand their perceptions and attitudes, to discover what is important to them and how they view the world. For U.S. university faculty working with students from Korea, this involves observing, initiating relationships with and learning as much as possible about individual

students and their cultures. It was encouraging that several of the participants in this study made this recommendation.

Next, says Freire (1970/2003), educators (e.g., classroom instructors, administrators, curriculum designers, discipline experts, social scientists) must work with each other to help identify possible *contradictions* in the lives of the learners. These contradictions are described as contrasts in the way students view the world and the way others might view the world. An example of a contradiction for Korean students in the U.S. would be if students believed their educational experiences in the U.S. did not impact their worldviews; in other words, they simply come to the U.S. to receive a degree and are not affected by cultural, social, or other influences they encounter while in the country. In fact, this study and others have indicated that the worldview of Korean students at U.S. institutions of higher education might very well be impacted by their cross-cultural experience. Educators, believes Freire (1970/2003) are in a position to identify those possible contradictions.

Once contradictions have been revealed, it is not the job of educators to merely inform students of those contradictions, however. Again, teachers should not simply present their interpretations of reality to students; on the contrary, it is the teachers' role to encourage to students to ask questions about and explore *different realities*. In order to do this, states Freire (1970/2003), teachers should develop what he calls *codifications* or pedagogical objects or materials (such as sketches or photographs in the case of illiterate adults). "The codifications should be simple in their complexity and offer various decoding possibilities in order to avoid the brainwashing tendencies of propaganda" (Freire, 1970/2003, p. 115). In addition, writes Freire (1970/2003), "It is inadmissible . . . to present pictures of reality unfamiliar to the participants" (p. 114). These suggestions have two implications for the teachers of Korean

students in U.S. universities. The first is that teaching materials and content should be somewhat recognizable to students; that is, they should have some meaning. As one of the student participants in this study indicated, it was challenging when teachers presented subjects that required an understanding of U.S. culture or history; in this case, it was difficult for Korean students to put learning into context and derive any meaning from what was being taught. Secondly, the readings, lecture content, and other pedagogical materials used in the class should be aimed at developing students' critical thinking skills, helping them derive meaning, and getting them to identify the possible contradictions in their lives.

Once the codifications have been prepared and all their possible thematic facets have been studied by the interdisciplinary team, the investigators (educators) begin the third stage of the investigation by returning to the area to initiate decoding dialogues. (Freire, 1970/2003, p. 117)

For teachers, this involves the facilitation of discussion or other learning activities about the materials that illicit the students' insights and perceptions. In this case, says Freire (1970/2003), the teacher "must not only listen to the individuals but must challenge them, posing as problems both the codified existential situation and their own answers" (p. 118). The importance of recording or taking notes of these dialogues is also recommended at this stage.

Once these discussions have taken place, Freire (1970/2003) suggests educators review their notes and recordings of the discussions and "begin to list the themes explicit and implicit in the affirmations made during the sessions" (p. 119). This process involves educators from various social sciences, if possible, working together to identify issues brought up by students that clarify their interpretation of the material and point to potential areas of instruction based on both the students' and teachers' view of the subject. The final step in this process is the

development of “didactic” teaching material, lessons, or curriculum that aims at raising the awareness of all participants in the educational process. This material is then presented to students. As Freire (1970/2003) explains, “The first task of the basic-education teachers is to present the general program of the educational campaign. The people will find themselves in this program; it will not seem strange to them, since it originated with them” (p. 123).

While it is recognized that the approach to teaching reading and writing to migrant workers in Brazil may differ from the way in which educators work with Korean students in U.S. universities, Freire’s (1970/2003) approach to *demystifying* the teaching and learning process and creating learning situations that have relevance to students and teachers provides guidance to all those involved in educational exchanges. As this study indicates, much more can be done to provide meaningful cross-cultural learning experiences not only for university students from the Republic of Korea coming to study in the United States but also for the professors who have the opportunity to learn with them.

If efforts in this regard are to be truly meaningful and long-lasting, however, institutional support is a necessity; initiatives aimed at *demystification* must involve more than just the good intentions of and hard work on the part of teachers and students. It is essential that administrative units at institutions of higher education be committed to facilitating change and coordinating dialogue across the disciplines. In the same manner in which this study elicited the opinions of faculty and students from a number of different academic departments, attempts at promoting demystification must provide the opportunity for educators and learners representing various offices and majors to share insights and develop strategies that benefit the institution as a whole. In order for this to take place, university administrators at the highest levels should be

aware and supportive of institutional-wide discussions and strategic initiatives that are aimed at enhancing *border crossings*.

As the current study also indicates, those who have an extensive awareness of more than one culture can play an especially important role in not only supporting the process of acculturation for international students in the U.S. but also providing insight into the influences on education and means of empowering individuals involved in cross-cultural educational experiences. Just as the Korean faculty participants in this study, due to their unique perceptions based on exposure to the two countries being discussed, were often able to identify themes and issues related to both Korean and U.S. culture and education that some of the other participants were not, other individuals with cross-cultural experiences can be used by the institution to provide a more balanced perspective and offer suggestions that others might not be able to provide. This recognition points to the need for institutions of higher education in the U.S. to hire and make use of faculty with bicultural or multicultural backgrounds.

### **Future Studies**

As the themes of this study emerged and a review of the findings was conducted, it became evident that future studies which investigate a number of issues not fully dealt with in this study are indicated. Four suggested topics for further investigation are an extensive discussion about the role that enculturation plays in cross-cultural exchanges, a look at how the historical influence of the concept of yin/yang might have affected the responses of the Korean participants, a comparison of the responses of participants by their major or discipline, and a more in-depth examination of the experiences of Korean faculty members teaching in the United States. Conducting research in these areas would further illuminate the issues addressed in this

study as well as provide insight into other areas related to acculturation, border pedagogy, and international education.

As was discussed in this study, there were indications that the student participants were not only dealing with the processes of assimilation and acculturation but also experiencing some form of enculturation, which Pai et al. (2006) define as “the process of learning one’s own culture” (p. 39). The student participants identified several realizations they had about Korea and Korean culture after coming to study in the U.S. Since this study did not probe into this issue in detail, further research examining the learning that occurs about one’s own culture when living in another would provide further insight in the process of enculturation. Furthermore, Jegede and Aikenhead’s (1999) interpretation of enculturation as a process which occurs when the culture of the classroom is in harmony with the pupil’s *life-world culture* is an additional indication that more research about this process is needed. According to this interpretation, assimilation and acculturation take place when there is a conflict between what is being taught in the classroom and one’s worldview; enculturation, on the other hand, implies that there is no such conflict and that smooth border crossings are already taking place. If this is the case, it may very well be that the promotion of enculturation is just as important if not more important than the promotion of acculturation. Again, future studies might be able to provide more illumination in this regard.

In the literature review of this study, one of the historical influences on Korean education that was examined was the concept of yin/yang (*um/yang* in Korean). According to several educators, this holistic interpretation of the universe might have an impact on the manner in which Koreans speak and write (Crowe & Peterson, 1995; S. O. Kim, 1983; Ok, 1991; Tucker, 2003). If one views the universe as being inter-connected and complementary, there might be a

tendency on the part of that individual to see the whole before the specifics or to focus on general concepts as opposed to particulars. In reviewing the responses of the student participants in this study, both the principal researcher and co-investigator felt that some of the students did not provide detailed responses to the questions. In other words, the student participants often gave short, general answers with little explanation or few examples, and when asked to elaborate, they sometimes had difficulty in doing so. Whether this observation is an indication of the influence of an *um/yang* mentality or a result of the specific interview questions asked is a matter that future research could investigate.

Another possible topic for future studies is also related to the responses of the student participants. A comparison of the answers of the undergraduate student participants to the answers of the graduate student participants in this study revealed no significant differences. In other words, there was no discernable difference in the responses of the undergraduate students compared to the answers of the graduate students. One comparison that was not made in this study, however, was between the responses of students according to their field of study. For example, it is possible that students majoring in Technology might have responded differently than students majoring in Education or Business. Again, further research might shed light on this matter.

A final suggestion for future investigation relates to faculty from the Republic of Korea who are teaching in U.S. institutions of higher education. The *Unexpected Findings* section of Chapter Four in this study discusses this population to some degree, but additional studies of the experiences of these individuals would not only provide more information about the issues dealt with in this study but also give more insight into the issues and perceptions of those who have spent extensive periods of time in more than one country. If it is true that bicultural or

multicultural individuals have a key role to play in helping educational institutions both serve the needs of international students and develop *border crossing* skills for both faculty and students, it is especially important that the experiences and perceptions of this group be examined in detail.

### **Conclusion**

Writing of the experience of being caught between two cultures and of the pressure to assimilate to one or the other, Anzaldúa (1987) describes the feeling of being *cultureless*. “I have no country,” she laments (p. 81). Yet in the end she concludes:

I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet (p. 81).

For an individual deeply rooted in one dominant culture who travels to and lives in another, abruptly becoming a member of the subordinate group, the feeling of being *without a culture* is understandable. Suddenly on an unfamiliar playing ground with rules that may not make sense and actors from the new culture calling the shots, it is natural for the *visitor* to feel as if she or he does not belong and that the only thing that matters is *following along* and *surviving*. As time goes on, and the person becomes more familiar with the new environment, there can then be the sense of *losing touch* with one’s home culture. Realizing that she or he does not truly belong in the new culture while struggling to keep true to the values and customs she or he was raised with can cause much inner conflict and stress. This *cultureless* feeling can be the source of much anxiety and doubt. However, as Anzaldúa (1987) and Giroux (2005) and Freire (1970/2003) remind us, feeling temporarily without a culture opens up the door for the creation of new ways of viewing and comprehending the world and our place in it; it can be the beginning

of a new identify, a new commitment, a new worldview. With the right conditions and guidance, a rebirth can occur.

For the Koreans who leave their countries to receive an education in the United States and for the teachers and students who learn with them, this is a reminder that more than just receiving a diploma can be the goal of education. For all those struggling to hold on to a sense of meaning and belonging in the milieu of postmodernism, this thought can light the way.

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**APPENDIX A****SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS (English)****Background Questions**

What is your gender?

Which age group do you belong to: 18-20, 21-23, 24-26, 26-28, 29-30, over 30?

What is your major? Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?

How long have you been at this university?

Did you study at any other school in the U.S. (including English program) before attending this university? If so, which school(s) and for how long?

What is your current G.P.A.?

Which types of classes (subject) at this university have you been most successful in?

Which types of classes did you have most difficulty with?

What is the highest level of education you obtained in Korea before coming to the U.S.?

On a scale of 1-5 (1=poor, 5=excellent), how would you rank your academic success in Korea?

On a scale of 1-5 (1=poor, 5=excellent), how would you rank your academic success in the U.S.?

On a scale of 1-5 (1=poor, 5=excellent), how would you rank your English ability before coming to the U.S.?

On a scale of 1-5 (1=poor, 5=excellent), how would you rank your English ability now?

How did you meet the English proficiency requirements for this university (e.g., TOEFL score, graduation from English language program)?

On a scale of 1-5 (1=poor, 5=excellent), how would you rank your understanding of U.S. culture before you came to the U.S.?

On a scale of 1-5 (1=poor, 5=excellent), how would you rank your understanding of U.S. culture now?

What do you consider your strengths as a student to be? Your weaknesses?

Before coming to the U.S., what are some ways that you learned about U.S. culture?

What are your plans after you graduate from this university?

### **Research Question #1**

Do you feel Korean culture affects the way you study and learn? If so, how?

Describe the Korean educational system.

Why is the Korean educational system the way it is? What are some important influences (historical, cultural, political, social, etc.) that have shaped this system?

What does it take to be a successful student in Korea? What skills and study habits does a Korean student need to be successful?

Describe a typical university classroom in Korea. What are typical classroom activities and behavior? How do most instructors teach? Describe your favorite teacher in Korea.

What made him/her a good teacher in your opinion?

What were some of your strengths as a student in Korea? How did you develop those strengths?

What were some of your weaknesses as a student in Korea? Why do you consider them weaknesses?

What are some of the skills and learning strategies you used in Korea that you also use in the U.S.?

Do you believe the Korean educational system has a political agenda? Why or why not?

How does the use of these strategies affect your performance in the U.S.?

### **Research Question #2**

Describe the American educational system.

Why is the American educational system the way it is? What are some important influences (historical, cultural, political, social, etc.) that have shaped this system?

How do you feel the American educational system is affected by culture, politics, society, etc.?

Describe a typical university classroom in the U.S. What are typical classroom activities and behavior?

What does it take to be a successful student in the U.S.? How do U.S. students develop those strengths?

Do you believe the U.S. educational system has a political agenda? Why or why not?

### **Research Question #3**

What are some of the biggest differences between the Korean and U.S. education systems and universities in particular?

What are some cultural differences between Korea and the U.S. that have an impact on your performance, behavior, and attitudes about studying in the U.S.?

What are some of the biggest differences between Korean and U.S. university students in the way they study? Behave in class? Interact with the teacher?

What are some similarities between Korean and U.S. university students in the way they study? Behave in class? Interact with the teacher?

What are some of the challenges and difficulties, related to either language or cultural differences, that you have faced while studying in the U.S.?

Are there differences in the way that assessment is done in Korean and U.S. universities?

If so, please explain.

If you studied in the U.S. the way that you studied in Korea, would you be successful?

Would a typical U.S. student be successful in Korean universities? Why or why not?

#### **Research Question #4**

Do you feel the way you approach learning has changed since you came to the U.S.? If so, how? If not, why do you feel it hasn't changed?

Do you feel you have become a better student since coming to the U.S.? Why or why not?

Do you feel some of your strengths as a student in Korea have weakened here in the U.S.? Why or why not?

Do you feel that there are some weaknesses you had as a student in Korea that you improved here in the U.S.? Why or why not?

If you went to a Korean university tomorrow and studied the same way you do here, would you be successful? Why or why not?

#### **Research Question #5**

Do you feel pressured to "become American" in the way you study? Why or why not?

To be successful in the classroom here, do you feel to approach learning in the same way that the U.S. students approach learning? Why or why not?

Overall, do you feel the instructors you've had in the U.S. are trying you to see things from the American point of view? Why or why not?

Do you feel your U.S. instructors are supportive of the way you study and understand your viewpoint and background? Please explain.

Do you feel "less Korean" than you did when you arrived here? Why or why not?

What are some of the most important things you have learned about U.S. society and culture since studying here? What about other cultures besides the U.S.?

Have you changed your opinion about U.S. politics since coming here? If so, please explain these changes.

Are there things you now realize about Korean society and culture that you weren't aware of before you came to the U.S.? If so, what are they? What made you realize these things?

### **Research Question #6**

Why types of class assignments and activities in the U.S. are the easiest for you? Why do you think these are the easiest?

Why types of class assignments and activities in the U.S. are the most difficult for you?

Why do you think these are difficult?

What types of class assignments and activities in the U.S. do you enjoy the most? What types do you dislike the most? Please explain your answers.

What types of class assignments and activities in the U.S. do you feel are the most helpful to you? What types are least helpful? Please explain your answers.

What type of feedback from your U.S. professors is most helpful to you? Why is this helpful? What type of feedback is not helpful? Why is this not helpful?

What are some specific ways that U.S. instructors can be helpful to and supportive of Korean students in their classes?

In some ways, do you feel you have an advantage over the U.S. students in your classes here? If so, what are those advantages? If not, why not?

Do you feel that U.S. professors should change their teaching and assessment methods to better accommodate the Korean students in their classes?

Please describe the U.S. professor you thought has been the most helpful to you as a student. Why do you think s/he was helpful?

What suggestions would you give to U.S. instructors who have Korean students in their classes?

What suggestion would you give to other Korean students on how to be successful in their studies at U.S. universities?

### **Research Question #7**

What are some of the most important things you have learned about U.S. society and culture since studying here? What about other cultures besides the U.S.?

Are there things you now realize about Korean society and culture that you weren't aware of before you came to the U.S.? If so, what are they? What made you realize these things?

Do you feel the experience of studying in the U.S. will help you in the future? If so, how will it be helpful? If not, why do you feel it won't be helpful?

Has your worldview changed since coming to the U.S.? If so, how? If not, why do you feel it hasn't changed?

When you return to Korea, do you think you will behavior and think differently because of your experience in the U.S.? Please explain.

Has your experience here has made you more supportive of the U.S. point of view? Less supportive? Please explain.

In the future, if you travel to or live in another country besides the U.S. or Korea, do you think it will be easier because of your experience living and studying here? Why or why not?

Has your desire to learn about other cultures increased because of your experience here?

Why or why not?

## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS (Korean)

#### Background Questions

성별은 무엇입니까?

몇살입니까?

전공은 무엇이며, 당신은 학부생입니까 아니면 대학원생입니까?

여기 ISU 에서 얼마동안 공부했습니까?

여기 ISU 에서 공부하기전에 언어연수프로그램을 포함해서 다른 미국대학교에 다닌적이 있습니까? 만약 있다면, 어디서, 얼마동안 공부했습니까?

총학점 평균은 얼마입니까?

ISU 에서 수강한 수업중에서 가장 높은 학습성취도를 보인 과목들은 어떤 수업이었습니까? 또 가장 어려운 수업은 어떤 것이었습니까?

미국에 오기전에 한국에서 받은 최종학력은 무엇입니까?

한국에서 이룩한 당신의 학업성취도를 1(저조함) 부터 5(우수함)까지 숫자로 나타낸다면?

미국에서 이룩한 당신의 학업성취도를 1(저조함) 부터 5(우수함)까지 숫자로 나타낸다면?

미국에 오기전에 당신의 영어실력을 1(저조함) 부터 5(우수함)까지 숫자로 나타낸다면?

현재의 당신의 영어실력을 1(저조함) 부터 5(우수함)까지 숫자로 나타낸다면?

어떻게 미국대학에서 요구하는 영어실력 요구사항을 충족시켰습니까? (예를 들면, 토플점수, 연수프로그램)

미국에 오기전에 미국문화에 대한 이해도를 1(저조함) 부터 5(우수함)까지 숫자로 나타낸다면?

현재의 미국문화에 대한 이해도를 1(저조함) 부터 5(우수함)까지 숫자로 나타낸다면?

학생으로서 장점과 단점은 무엇이라고 생각합니까?

미국에 오기전에 어떠한 방법으로 미국문화를 배웠습니까?

미국에서 대학을 졸업한 후의 계획은 무엇입니까?

### **Research Question #1**

한국문화가 미국에서 공부하는 방식에 영향을 끼친다고 생각합니까? 그렇다면, 어떻게 영향을 미친다고 생각합니까?

한국의 교육시스템에 설명해 보세요.

현재의 한국의 교육시스템에 어떠한 요소들이 영향을 끼친다고 생각합니까? (예를 들면, 역사적, 문화적, 정치적, 사회적 영향 등)

한국에서 우수한 학생이 되기위해서 필요한 조건은 무엇입니까? 어떠한 기술과 학습습관들이 성공으로 이끈다고 생각합니까?

한국의 전형적인 대학교 수업에 대해서 말해보세요. 전형적인 학습활동과 행동들이 있다면 무엇입니까? 대부분의 교수들이 가르치는 방식은?

한국에서 당신이 가장 좋아하는 선생님에 대해서 말해보세요. 그리고 좋아하게된 이유는 무엇입니까?

한국에서 공부할때 학생으로서 당신의 장점들은 무엇이었습니까? 어떻게 그러한 장점들을 개발했습니까?

한국에서 공부할때 학생으로서 당신의 약점들은 무엇이었습니까? 왜 당신은 그러한 것들이 약점이라고 생각합니까?

미국에서도 사용하고 있는 한국에서 사용한 학습기술이나 학습전략들은 무엇입니까?

한국의 교육제도가 정치적인 의제를 가지고 있다고 생각합니까? 있다면 왜 그렇게 생각합니까? 또 없다면 그 이유는 무엇입니까?

한국에서 사용한 당신의 학습전략의 사용이 미국에서 공부하는 방법이나 전략에 영향을 미친다고 생각합니까?

### **Research Question #2**

미국의 교육시스템을 묘사하십시오.

현재의 미국의 교육시스템에 어떠한 요소들이 영향을 끼친다고 생각합니까? (예를 들면, 역사적, 문화적, 정치적, 사회적 영향 등)

미국의 교육제도가 문화, 정치, 사회적 요소에 의해서 영향을 받는다고 생각합니까?

전형적인 미국의 대학교 수업에 대해서 말해보세요. 전형적인 학습활동과 행동들이 있다면 무엇입니까?

미국에서 우수한 학생이 되기위해 무엇이 필요하다고 생각합니까? 어떻게 미국학생들은 그러한 장점들을 개발한다고 생각합니까?

미국의 교육제도가 정치적인 의제를 가지고 있다고 생각합니까? 있다면 왜 그렇게 생각합니까? 또 없다면 그 이유는 무엇입니까?

**Research Question #3**

한국과 미국의 교육제도에서 가장 큰 차이점은 무엇이라고 생각합니까? 특히 대학의 교육제도를 비교해서 말해보세요.

미국에서 공부하는 당신의 학습과 행동, 그리고 태도에 영향을 미치는 한국과 미국의 문화적 차이는 어떤 것들이 있습니까?

한국과 미국 대학생들이 공부하는 방식에서 가장 큰 차이점은 무엇이라고 생각합니까? 수업중 행동과 교수님과의 대화방식에 있어서 차이점은 무엇입니까?

한국과 미국 대학생들이 공부하는 방식에서 비슷한 점은 무엇이라고 생각합니까? 수업중 행동과 교수님과의 대화방식에 있어서 비슷한 점은 무엇입니까?

언어나 문화적인 차이로 인해서 미국에서 공부하는 동안 겪은 어려움이나 힘든 점이 있다면 무엇입니까?

미국과 한국대학의 평가방법에 있어서 차이점이 있다고 생각합니까?

한국에서 공부한 방식으로 미국에서 공부해왔습니까? 한국적인 공부방식이 성공적이었습니까?

전형적인 미국학생이 한국 대학교에서 학업적으로 성공할 수 있다고 생각합니까? 왜 그렇다고 생각합니까? 왜 그렇지 않다고 생각합니까?

**Research Question #4**

미국에 온 이후로 공부하는 방식에 있어서 변화가 있다고 생각합니까? 있다면 어떠한 변화들이 있습니까? 없다면 왜 변화지 않았다고 생각합니까?

미국에 온 이후로 더 나은 학생이 되었다고 생각합니까? 그렇다면 왜 그렇게 생각하는지, 또 그렇지 않다면 왜 그렇게 생각합니까?

여기 미국에서 공부하면서 한국에서 학생으로서 가지고 있는 장점들이 약화되었다고  
 생각합니까? 그렇다면 왜 그렇게 생각하는지, 또 그렇지 않다면 왜 그렇게 생각합니까?  
 한국에서 학생으로서 가졌던 약점들이 미국에서 공부하면서 향상되었다고 생각합니까?  
 그렇다면 왜 그렇게 생각하는지, 또 그렇지 않다면 왜 그렇게 생각합니까?  
 만약 한국대학으로 다시 돌아가서 지금 여기 미국에서 공부하는 방식대로 한다면,  
 성공할 것이라고 생각합니까? 그렇다면 왜 그렇게 생각하는지, 또 그렇지 않다면 왜  
 그렇게 생각합니까?

### **Research Question #5**

공부하는 방식에 있어서 미국학생들처럼 되도록 압력을 느낀적이 있습니까? 그렇다면 왜  
 그렇게 생각하는지, 또 그렇지 않다면 왜 그렇게 생각합니까?

여기 미국 학교에서 성공하기 위해서 미국학생들이 공부하는 방식과 똑같은 방식으로  
 공부해야 된다고 생각합니까? 그렇다면 왜 그렇게 생각하는지, 또 그렇지 않다면 왜  
 그렇게 생각합니까?

대체적으로 미국에서 공부하는 동안, 가르치는 교수님들이 미국적인 관점에서 보도록  
 권유하거나 유도한적이 있다고 생각합니까? 그렇다면 왜 그렇게 생각하는지, 또 그렇지  
 않다면 왜 그렇게 생각합니까?

미국 교수님들이 당신의 공부방식을 지지하며 당신의 견해와 배경을 이해한다고  
 느낍니까?

당신은 여기 미국에 처음 도착했을 때보다 덜 한국적이라고 느낍니까? 그렇다면 왜  
 그렇게 생각하는지, 또 그렇지 않다면 왜 그렇게 생각합니까?

미국에서 공부하는 동안 미국사회와 문화에 대해서 배운것 중에서 가장 중요한 것들은 무엇무엇이 있습니까? 미국문화 이외의 다른 문화들에서도 배운것이 있다면 무엇이 있습니까?

여기 미국에 온 이후로 미국 정치에 대한 당신의 견해는 변했습니까? 만약 그렇다면 예를 들어보시오.

한국사회와 문화에 대해서 미국에 오기전에 인식하지 못했던 사항들이 있습니까? 있다면 무엇이 있습니까? 만약 있다면, 새로운 사항을 깨닫게 된 계기는 무엇입니까?

### **Research Question #6**

미국에서 공부하는동안 가장 쉬운 수업과제나 활동들은 무엇입니까? 왜 이런 과제나 활동들이 쉽다고 생각합니까?

미국에서 공부하는동안 가장 어려운 수업과제나 활동들은 무엇입니까? 왜 이런 과제나 활동들이 어렵다고 생각합니까?

미국에서 공부하는동안 가장 재미있는 수업과제나 활동들은 무엇입니까? 또 가장 싫은 수업과제나 활동들은 무엇입니까?

미국에서 공부하는동안 가장 도움이 되는 수업과제나 활동들은 무엇입니까? 또 가장 도움이 되지않는 활동들은 무엇입니까?

미국에서 공부하는동안 교수님의 피드백중에서 어떤 종류가 가장 도움이 됩니까? 또 가장 도움이 되지않는 피드백은 어떤 종류입니까?왜 도움이 되지않는다고 생각합니까?

미국에서 공부하고 있는 한국학생들을 위해 미국 교수님들이 도와줄수 있는 방법들이 있다고 생각합니까?

어떤 면에서, 미국학생들보다 장점들이 있다고 생각합니까? 만약 있다면 어떤 장점들이 있습니까? 또 없다면 왜 없다고 생각합니까?

미국교수님들이 한국학생들을 돕고 수용하기 위해서 수업방식과 평가방법을 바꾸어야 한다고 생각합니까?

지금까지 가장 도움이 되었다고 생각되는 교수님에 대해서 설명해 보세요. 또 왜 도움이 되었다고 생각합니까?

한국학생들을 가르치고 있는 미국 교수님들에게 드리고 싶은 조언이 있다면 무엇입니까? 미국대학교에서 공부하고 있는 한국학생들에게 학업에서 성공하는 방법에 대해서 조언을 한다면 무엇을 추천하고 싶습니까?

### **Research Question #7**

미국에서 공부하면서 미국사회와 문화에 대해서 배운것 중에서 가장 중요한것들은 무엇이라고 생각합니까? 미국문화 이외의 다른 문화들에서도 배운것이 있다면 무엇이 있습니까?

한국사회와 문화에 대해서 미국에 오기전에 인식하지 못했던 사항들이 있습니까? 있다면 무엇이 있습니까? 새로운 사항을 깨닫게 된 계기는 무엇입니까?

미국에서 공부한 경험이 당신의 미래에 도움이 된다고 생각합니까? 만약 그렇게 생각한다면 어떤면에서 도움이 된다고 생각합니까? 또 도움이 되지않는다고 생각한다면 왜 그렇게 생각합니까?

미국에서 공부한 이후로 세계관이 변했습니까? 그렇다면 어떻게 변했습니까? 또 그렇지 않다면, 왜 변하지 않았다고 생각합니까?

한국으로 다시 돌아간다면, 미국에서 공부한 경험때문에 당신의 행동과 생각이 다른 한국사람들과 다를것이라고 생각합니까?

미국에서 공부한 경험이 미국에 대한 우호적인 관점을 가지게 했다고 생각합니까 아니면 적대적인 관점을 가지게 했다고 생각합니까?

만약 미래에 미국과 한국이외의 다른 나라를 여행하거나 거주한다면 미국에서 생활하고 공부한 경험이 도움이 될것이라고 생각합니까? 그렇다면 왜 그런지, 또 그렇지 않다면 왜 그렇지 않은지 설명해 보시오.

미국에서의 경험이 다른 문화를 배우고자 하는 마음을 더 가지게 했다고 생각합니까? 그렇다면 왜 그런지, 또 그렇지 않다면 왜 그렇지 않은지 설명해 보시오.

**APPENDIX C****SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR U.S. FACULTY PARTICIPANTS****Background**

What is your academic background (degrees, etc.)?

What subject do you teach? What specific classes?

Do you teach both undergraduate and graduate level courses? If not, which?

How long have you been teaching in this field? At this university?

Please describe any experiences you've had traveling, studying or working in countries outside the U.S.

Briefly describe your teaching style and teaching philosophy.

Describe one of your typical classes. What instructional strategies do you generally use?

What classes are you teaching this semester? What are some of the expectations and assignments for these classes?

In general, how many students do you have in a class?

What percentage of the students you've had in this university would you say were international students (on student or exchange visas)?

Approximately how many Korean students have you had in your classes at this university since you began teaching here? Which classes were these students in? Please try to recall what you can about these students (major, gender, how long they'd been in U.S., etc.).

How do you know these students are Korean and not from other Asian countries?

How many Korean students do you currently have in your classes? Which classes? Please describe these students (major, gender, how long they've been in U.S., etc.).

**Research Question #1**

What have you heard or read about the Korean educational system? What are some of the influences (historical, cultural, political, social, etc.) that have helped shaped this system?

As far as you know, what are typical teaching and learning strategies in Korea?

What do you think it take to be a successful university student in Korea? What skills and study habits does a Korean student need to be successful in Korea?

Describe a typical university classroom in Korea. What are typical classroom activities and behavior? How do most instructors teach? What kind of assessment do you think is most commonly used?

What are some of your perceptions about the Korean students you've had in your classes here? In general, what are some learning strategies they have that have helped them be successful? What are some areas in which they have struggled?

Overall, do you feel that the way Korean students study in the U.S. is typical of the way they would study in Korea? Why or why not?

**Research Question #2**

What are some of the ways you feel the American educational system is affected by culture, politics, society, etc.?

What does it take to be a successful university student in the U.S.? How do U.S. students develop those strengths?

What does it take to be a successful professor at the university level in the U.S.?

Do you believe the U.S. education system has a political agenda? Why or why not?

**Research Question #3**

What do you think some of the biggest differences between the Korean and U.S. education systems and universities are?

What are some cultural differences between Korea and the U.S. that have an impact on Korean students' performance, behavior, and attitudes about studying in the U.S.?

What are some of the biggest differences between Korean and U.S. university students in the way they study? Behave in class? Interact with the teacher?

What do you think are some of the biggest differences between Korean and U.S. university professors in the way they teach? Behave in class? Interact with the students? Assess students' performance?

What are some similarities between Korean and U.S. university students in the way they study? Behave in class? Interact with the teacher?

If Korean students use the same learning strategies and habit they do in Korea here in the U.S., do you think they would be successful? Why or why not?

In your opinion, would a typical U.S. student be successful in Korean universities? Why or why not?

**Research Question #4**

From what you have observed, have you noticed any changes in the ways the Korean students you've had approached learning? If so, please describe these changes. Why do you think these changes came about? If not, why do you think no changes occurred?

Overall, is it your impression that the academic performance of Korean students generally improves over the course of one semester? Please explain.

Give some examples of specific ways in which you've encouraged Korean students to change their learning styles and strategies.

Give some examples of specific ways in which you've encouraged Korean student not to change their learning styles and strategies.

**Research Question #5**

Do you feel the best way for Korean students to be successful in U.S. universities is to become "more American"? Please explain.

At times, do you feel the need to encourage Korean students to assimilate to the American way of doing thing and thinking? If so, in what ways do you do this? How do you feel about this process? If not, how do you prevent doing this?

Do you feel that the current curriculum you work with is supportive of the process of acculturation of Korean students? Why or why not?

Do you believe there are forces (administrative, corporate, political, alumni, etc.) that pressure you to teach in a certain way? Please explain. If so, how do you respond to these influences?

What is the role of higher education in the U.S.?

Do you believe that current universities in the U.S. promote hegemony? Why or why not?

If so, what role do you play in that process? If not, how do you avoid playing a role in that process?

In your opinion, what is the difference between assimilation and acculturation? Which process are you most supportive of? In what ways to do support that process?

Do you believe this university is supportive of the process of acculturation for Korean students? Why or why not?

Are you familiar with some of the concepts of Reconceptualism in curriculum design? If so, how do you feel these concepts might relate to the teaching of Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education?

Are you familiar with Henry Giroux's Border Pedagogy? If so, how do you feel these concepts might relate to the teaching of Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education?

**Research Question #6**

Which specific activities, assignments, and teaching strategies do you feel are the most supportive of the process of acculturation for Korean students? Why do you feel these are beneficial? Please give examples of these activities, assignments and strategies.

Can you think of any specific activities, assignments, and teaching strategies that you feel are not supportive of the process of acculturation for these students? If so, please describe them and explain why you believe they are not supportive.

What are specific ways that you can help Korean students develop their abilities in the four main areas of English language proficiency (speaking, listening, reading, writing)?

What type of feedback do you feel is the most helpful for Korean students? Why is this helpful? What type of feedback is not helpful? Why is this not helpful?

Do you feel that U.S. professors should change their teaching and assessment methods to better accommodate the Korean students in their classes? Why or why not?

What suggestions would you give to other U.S. instructors who have Korean students in their classes?

What suggestions would you give to Korean students on how to be successful in their studies at U.S. universities?

**Research Question #7**

What are some things you've learned from the Korean students you've had in your classes?

Do you feel the way you teach has changed as a result of your experience working with Korean students? Why or why not?

Has working with this population in particular made you a better teacher? Why or why not?

Do you feel your awareness and understanding of Korean students and culture has increased as a result of your experience working with this group of students? If so, how?

Do you feel your experience working with Korean students has influenced your worldview and your understanding of the global community and your role in it? Please explain.

**APPENDIX D****SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR KOREAN FACULTY PARTICIPANTS****Background**

What is your academic background (degrees, etc.)? Did you receive your degrees in the U.S., in Korea, or in another country?

What subject do you teach at this university? What specific classes? What is your area of specialization?

Do you teach both undergraduate and graduate level courses? If not, which?

How long have you been teaching in this field? At this university?

Have you ever taught in Korea? If so, please describe that experience.

Have you taught at a university in the U.S. before?

How many years were you a student in Korea? In the U.S.?

Why did you choose to teach at a U.S. university? Do you plan to continue teaching in the U.S. or would you prefer to return to Korea (or another country) to teach at some point in the future?

Briefly describe your teaching style and teaching philosophy.

Describe one of your typical classes. What instructional strategies do you generally use?

What classes are you teaching this semester? What are some of the expectations and assignments for these classes?

In general, how many students do you have in a class?

What percentage of the students you've had in this university would you say were international students (on student or exchange visas)?

Approximately how many Korean students have you had in your classes at this university since you began teaching here? Which classes were these students in? Please try to recall what you can about these students (major, gender, how long they'd been in U.S., etc.).

### **Research Question #1**

Describe the Korean educational system.

Why is the Korean educational system the way it is? What are some important influences (historical, cultural, political, social, etc.) that have shaped this system?

What does it take to be a successful student in Korea? What skills and study habits does a Korean student need to be successful?

Describe a typical university teacher in Korea. How is success measured for these teachers?

Describe a typical university classroom in Korea. What are typical classroom activities and behavior? What kind of assessment is most commonly used?

What are some of your perceptions about the Korean students you've had in your classes here? In general, what are some learning strategies they have that have helped them be successful? What are some areas in which they have struggled?

Overall, do you feel that the way Korean students study in the U.S. is typical of the way they would study in Korea? Why or why not?

### **Research Question #2**

Describe the American educational system.

Why is the American educational system the way it is? What are some important influences (historical, cultural, political, social, etc.) that have shaped this system?

How do you feel the American educational system is affected by culture, politics, society, etc.?

Describe a typical university classroom in the U.S. What are typical classroom activities and behavior?

What does it take to be a successful student in the U.S.? How do U.S. students develop those strengths?

Do you believe the U.S. educational system has a political agenda? Why or why not?

### **Research Question #3**

What are some of the biggest differences between the Korean and the U.S. education system?

Would you say your teaching style is influenced more by Korean culture, U.S. culture, or a combination of both? Please explain.

If you were to return to Korea to teach at a university, would the way you teach change?

If so, how?

What are some cultural differences between Korea and the U.S. that have an impact on Korean students' performance, behavior, and attitudes about studying in the U.S.?

What are some of the biggest differences between Korean and U.S. university students in the way they study? Behave in class? Interact with the teacher?

What are some of the benefits and challenges of teaching in the U.S. as a professor from Korea?

What do you think are some of the biggest differences between Korean and U.S. university professors in the way they teach? Behave in class? Interact with the students? Assess students' performance?

What are some similarities between Korean and U.S. university students in the way they study? Behave in class? Interact with the teacher?

If Korean students use the same learning strategies and habit they do in Korea here in the U.S., do you think they would be successful? Why or why not?

In your opinion, would a typical U.S. student be successful in Korean universities? Why or why not?

#### **Research Question #4**

Has your teaching style changed since you started teaching in the U.S. If so, how?

From what you have observed, have you noticed any changes in the ways the Korean students you've had approached learning? If so, please describe these changes. Why do you think these changes came about? If not, why do you think no changes occurred?

Overall, is it your impression that the academic performance of Korean students generally improves over the course of one semester? Please explain.

Give some examples of specific ways in which you've encouraged Korean students to change their learning styles and strategies.

Give some examples of specific ways in which you've encouraged Korean student not to change their learning styles and strategies.

#### **Research Question #5**

Do you feel the best way for Korean students to be successful in U.S. universities is to become "more American"? Please explain.

At times, do you feel the need to encourage Korean students to assimilate to the American way of doing thing and thinking? If so, in what ways do you do this? How do you feel about this process? If not, how do you prevent doing this?

Do you feel that the current curriculum you work with is supportive of the process of acculturation of Korean students? Why or why not?

Do you believe there are forces (administrative, corporate, political, alumni, etc.) that pressure you to teach in a certain way? Please explain. If so, how do you respond to these influences?

What is the role of higher education in the U.S.?

Do you believe that current universities in the U.S. promote hegemony? Why or why not?

If so, what role do you play in that process? If not, how do you avoid playing a role in that process?

In your opinion, what is the difference between assimilation and acculturation? Which process are you most supportive of? In what ways to do support that process?

Do you believe this university is supportive of the process of acculturation for Korean students? Why or why not?

Are you familiar with some of the concepts of Reconceptualism in curriculum design? If so, how do you feel these concepts might relate to the teaching of Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education?

Are you familiar with Henry Giroux's Border Pedagogy? If so, how do you feel these concepts might relate to the teaching of Korean students in U.S. institutions of higher education?

### **Research Question #6**

Which specific activities, assignments, and teaching strategies do you feel are the most supportive of the process of acculturation for Korean students? Why do you feel these are beneficial? Please give examples of these activities, assignments and strategies.

Can you think of any specific activities, assignments, and teaching strategies that you feel are not supportive of the process of acculturation for these students? If so, please describe them and explain why you believe they are not supportive.

What are specific ways that you can help Korean students develop their abilities in the four main areas of English language proficiency (speaking, listening, reading, writing)?

What type of feedback do you feel is the most helpful for Korean students? Why is this helpful? What type of feedback is not helpful? Why is this not helpful?

Do you feel that U.S. professors should change their teaching and assessment methods to better accommodate the Korean students in their classes? Why or why not?

What suggestions would you give to other U.S. instructors who have Korean students in their classes?

As both a teacher and a former student in the U.S., what suggestions would you give to Korean students on how to be successful in their studies at U.S. universities?

### **Research Question #7**

What are some things you've learned from U.S. students you've taught? From Korean students you've had in your classes?

Has working with students from different cultural backgrounds made you a better teacher?

Why or why not?

Do you feel your awareness and understanding of U.S. culture has increased as a result of your experience both studying and teaching in the U.S.? If so, how?

Do you feel your awareness and understanding of Korean culture has increased as a result of your experience studying and teaching in the U.S.? If so, how?

Do you feel your experience working with students from different cultural backgrounds has influenced your worldview and your understanding of the global community and your role in it? Please explain.