UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

The Bridge of Barbecue: *Jeong* and Korean Immigration into North Carolina

By
Katherine Caby Styers

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Faculty Advisor
Professor Christopher Nelson

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Introduction

I am sitting around a table with eight other people, all of whom I did not know until three months ago. While I am in South Korea it is my 20th birthday and all of these new friends here together to celebrate with me. The table is full of small and large dishes and two large grills sit in the middle of our table which we will soon be using to grill our dinner. Some of these friends are Korean, some are other exchange students, but during our time in South Korea, we have all picked up the social rules that are attached to Korean barbeque. And maybe that is why my friends choose this place for my birthday dinner. The atmosphere and meaning of this type of food makes it perfect to show our friendship with each other through small, almost unnoticeable social cues during the meal. Who grills the meat, where and when it goes on the plate, who asks for more side dishes, and how the so-ju is pour in the glass all have minute meanings and symbolize more than words how my friends feel about me. This was a pivotal moment in recognizing the powerful force that Korean barbeque has in forging friendships, where every gesture or absence of one speaks for itself.

It was when I returned to North Carolina, that I began to feel the absence of this form of communication and miss the ritual of Korean barbeque. Korean barbeque can be bought in more and more locations in the US, but the restaurants I went to never had the Korean barbeque with the environment, ritual, and group of people who all understand the same social rules and meaning behind the meal. Therefore, I began to wonder if or how Korean immigrants were experiencing this absence of cultural exchange and what the effects of this experience were? This research project attempts to understand how Korean food culture, and particularly Korean barbeque has changed with the growing Korean population in the Triangle area of North

Carolina. And how relationships are being formed and maintained through specific Korean food or with the absence of it.

The Korean term *jeong* (정) lies at the heart of all of these questions. It refers to the way of thinking and acting towards people and is a component of very close relationships for Korean people. Many Koreans think of *jeong* as a force that can be felt by people or can inhabit things, and, *jeong* is something that can both given and received. This is what I was feeling during my birthday dinner with all of my friends and barbeque was being used as a vehicle for this feeling of closeness. While there are many different ways to create, maintain, and renew *jeong* between people, Korean barbeque is one of the most popular ways to do this, and the one which I was the most familiar with during my time there. The connections between people, food, and relationships is very binding. Through looking at the particular cultural understandings of long-term relationships such as *jeong* as well as food culture, I investigated how these things translate when a community migrates to a new location where the setting, resources, and people are all different.

History of Korean Immigration

The story of Korean immigration in the US and particularly into North Carolina provides necessary context for understanding the dynamics of the Korean community today. For the most part, Korean immigration to the United States, began in the early 20th century, during the Japanese colonial era. Most of these immigrants came in small numbers and worked as laborers in the United States, and most of these laborers moved to Hawaii to work on sugar plantations (Min Pyong 1998, 2-3). Some students and politicians also came to places like Hawaii, exiled

from Korea for their outspokenness about Japanese rule. These first immigrants had little education and money, but came to the US for more opportunities. This kind of immigration lasted until the 1950's which was when Japanese colonial rule ended and the Korean War began. The Korean War created a connection between the Korean peninsula and the US which still exists today, through monetary and cultural exchanges. US intervention and aid in the Korean War established an exchange of people, money, ideas, and things. American soldiers have continued to be stationed there since the war; American capital has been pumped into to support these bases, as well as, American cultural influences (Letman 2017).

However, the Korean War also devastated the landscape and created brutal living conditions. Between North and South Korean military it is estimated that over 600,000 were killed or missing and over 1,600,000 civilians had the same fate and these numbers could easily be higher ("Korean War Facts" 2018). The losses represented in these estimates can only hint at Korean's experience during the war. Fear and violence was everywhere as the combat swept up the peninsula from Busan in the southern corner to the Northern border of North Korea and China. Many Koreans became war refugees and because many of the men were fighting in the war, the refugees were mainly women and children (Min Pyong 1998, 5). Even after the Korean War had reached an armistice, fear gripped South Korea as spies and communists sympathizers were being weeded out in their own Red Scare (Choe 2007). For these reasons and more, many people left Korea during and after the Korean war. And because the US still had soldiers placed in the country, they had the closest political relationship with the US, and thus many Koreans migrated to America. One such group that shows this connection is the women who married US

military men and then moved back with their husbands to America after their service was over. This also continues to occur as American soldiers are still stationed there today (Lee 2018).

The next big change to Korean immigration occurred because of the Immigration Act of 1965, which removed quotas on Asian migration for the purpose of increasing labor supply and improving relations with Asian countries. Because of the political instability of the country from the Korean War, and the harsh working conditions of the strict Korean government, some Koreans wanted to leave the country in search for better living conditions. The people who migrated were those who did not have a lot of money or power in Korea and were mainly laborers (Zong 2017). From 1970 to 1980, Korean immigration increased from 39,000 to 290,000 people, and in 2010 it grew to an astonishing 1.1 million (Zong 2017). These numbers show that even though the influx of Korean immigrants is relatively recent, a large number of Korean families and individuals are now living in the US and continue to grow the Korean-American community.

Today, the United States has the largest number of diasporic Koreans in the world, and its close economic, military, and political ties keep increasing the flow of people and materials between these two countries (Zong 2017). From 2000 to 2011 the Korean immigrant population increased by 41%, and today, Korean immigrants made up of 9.5% of the Asian American population (East-West Center). The number of Korean immigrants coming to the US has been leveling off in recent years, mainly because Korea and the US has become equals in technology and education. This has created less initiative for Koreans to move across an ocean to a new, foreign land.

California, Hawai'i, and New York all have large Korean immigrant, and Korean-American communities and Koreatowns have been established as centers of cultural activity in LA and New York City. It is these places that have received the most attention and study for Korean populations living in the US; however, states like Virginia and Texas also have large Korean immigrant communities, and in a study by the U.S. Census, North Carolina had the 7th fastest growing Korean population in 2010 (East-West Center). Some of the contributors to this growth are the college school systems in NC, cheaper living costs, and the variety of job markets. Charlotte, Raleigh, Durham, and Fayetteville are the main cities of Korean settlement in North Carolina, and are the places where communities and businesses have been created by these immigrants (East-West Center). There are also Korean communities around major military bases such as Fort Bragg in Fayetteville. In these bases, there is a substantial number of Korean women who married US military personnel in Korea and moved back to the US with them. There are also many factory and industry jobs which are filled by Korean immigrants such as chicken plants which recruit working class laborers in Korea, and contract them to come work in their factories with promises of residency in the US (Pae 1999). Fayetteville is home to one of these large factories which creates a community of Korean immigrants in the unlikely place of rural North Carolina. In recent years, more middle and upper class Koreans have been moving to North Carolina (Zong 2017). The Research Triangle has drawn many doctors and professors to the state, and the growth of the Korean economy has also brought people with college educations and substantial incomes. There is also a lot of foreign exchange students in NC colleges such as in UNC Chapel Hill, Duke, and NC State, which creates another generational community of

Koreans in North Carolina.

Gap in Research/Need for this Project

The intersection of *jeong*, Korean bbq, and immigration is a new dynamic that has not been researched before, particularly in the context of North Carolina. *Jeong* is a Korean term and has a lot of cultural context, and there are not many US studies on this topic that relate it to its role in food and immigration. Studies by Choi Yoo Jin and Yohan Ka explore how *jeong* functions in a religious setting within the Korean community and how it can be used in the protestant church sects in understanding Korean experiences of Christianity and spirituality (Choi 2010; Ka 2008; Yang 2006). While these sources do have useful descriptions of *jeong*, the setting, goal, and frame is very different from my research of a non-religious perspective dealing with food. Chung and Choi's medical paper, touches upon the psychological importance of *jeong* in relation to immigrant mental health and how its absence affects depression and anxiety (Chung and Cho). This paper represents the importance of understanding *jeong* in the Korean context when looking at psychological problems, but also social ones like my topic.

One paper which connects the topics of food, belonging, and migration is a paper by Suin Roberts who studied Korean migrant workers[1] in Germany in the 1960's (Roberts 2012). While her main focus is on linguistics and semiotics, some of her research touches of the role of food in identity for this group of Koreans. One of the most memorable stories in her paper was of Korean workers who were flying to Germany and added gochujang[2] to the airplane meals because they hated the taste so much and they wanted to take their home with them through food

[1] The majority of these migrant workers were Korean women who were trained as nurses.
[2] Guchusang (고추장) is a Korean sauce that is very spicy and is used in many Korean dishes. It is seen as one of the symbols of Korea.

(Roberts 2012, 114). Roberts draws a link between feelings of belonging and language and food, and the impact that culture shock with food among other aspects of German society had on many of the Korean workers (Roberts 2012, 113). Even though this paper is on Koreans in Germany, it still has some relevance and support for my own research in North Carolina, where food still plays an important role in group dynamics and cultural identity. By pulling in the concept of *jeong*, relationships and group bonding are added to my discussion of food and immigrant identity.

Man other studies have focused on Korean immigrant health and acculturation using sociological tools to measure how immigrants try or achieve integration into a host society (Choi and Tan 2016; Yun; Lee 2007.; Kim and Park 2009). One of the problems with this in my own research was the difficulty of placing actions or people into categories of integration in a culture/society. Trying to define things as half acculturated or fully acculturated did not work with what I was seeing in my own research when talking with people or within my observations. Many of these studies who look at Korean immigration do not take into account the notion of *jeong*. This is most likely because there are a lot of actions, steps, and feelings contained in *jeong* which can be difficult to put into charts and boxes. Studies dealing mainly in theories/emotions/categories can only find the definition useful with their research, and the whole aspect of daily action that is a part of *jeong* would be left behind.

The majority of these studies also focus on Korean communities in New York and California (Jang 2007; Lyu 2009; Kim 1981; Pyong 2011). Because they focus on larger communities, with more support and facilities available to each other compared to a rural setting, many of these studies did not touch on some of the issues that I see in my own research in North

Carolina. Lynn and Lee's research has looked at Korean communities in Georgia and adaptation strategies used by these migrants. However, they do not discuss my specific intersection of food, immigration, and relationships. One other study that was done in the American south was by Jang who looked at elder Floridian Korean communities through a sociological lense of bidimensional models. While this was another study where there were similar population densities, the demographic and categorization of cultural norms were very difficult from my own findings.

Methods

In this research project, I used semi-structured interviews to talk to Korean immigrants in the Triangle area. I interviewed a wide range of ages from college students who are second generation Korean Americans to older populations who immigrated from Korea. Most of the interviews took place in restaurants or cafes, and I used a snowballing sampling to reach people I didn't already know in the Korean community. I also did extensive participant observation in restaurants, markets, and cafes to see how people acted and used these spaces.

These interviews and participant observations helped me understand what happens to *jeong* and Korean bbq in North Carolina. I used these interviews and looked for the themes of social capital and kinship. Seeing patterns between interviews and what I learn from participant observation was critical in understanding what are Korean immigrant's and Korean-American's experience of relationships and activities supporting those relationships, and comparing this data to these overarching themes.

My Entry into Project

My interest in how food creates bonds between people began when I went to South Korea for a semester abroad in the spring of 2016. While I was there, I participated, experienced, and saw *jeong* when I made friends with other students. I noticed how restaurants and food culture held a different level of importance in the lives of Korean students in comparison to my own experiences in North Carolina. Therefore, I began to question how these experiences would be different for Korean immigrants living in North Carolina where an intersection of cultures collides. Another thing which has helped me in this project has been my study of the Korean language which has been helpful in seeing how specific words are used in creating and progressing relationships within and outside of the Korean community. This is something that comes up in my interviews with people who talk about ways in which long-term relationships are formed.

One of the motivations I had in choosing the specific locations and focus of this project, was the changes that I have witnessed in and around Chapel Hill over the four years I have lived here. Chapel Hill, Durham, and Raleigh have all seen an increase of Korean restaurants, markets, and businesses which have begun to serve those a part of and those outside of the Korean community. There has also been more Korean food in popular culture and non-Korean restaurants which shows an increase of visibility and value to Korean food in America and how Korea culture is becoming more popular and mainstream. These changes of popularity of Korean food and culture is another topic entirely, but the entrance into American mainstream culture creates new experiences felt by the Korean immigrant community.

As a white women interviewing Korean immigrants and Korean Americans, my perspective and experiences are different from who I am interviewing. I have attempted to limit as much as possible my own biases and have tried to show what is actually happening in the Korean community here and not just my own perspective. I have also struggled with limiting my prior ideas and notions about Korean ideas such as jeong into this paper and have often times had to step back and reevaluate how I was portraying this idea of *jeong*. Changing how I view this concept from a Korean cultural idea that I learn about in my classes and experiences to a anthropological perspective has taken a lot of consideration. I have had to look at jeong has something that may or may not be a uniquely Korean experience, but instead look at why and how it is thought of that way. Talking to interviews about the concept of *jeong* was also very interesting as some people think of *jeong* as been a specifically Korean concept and feeling. Having them try to articulate their notion of this was particularly challenging. My interviews and participant observation have allowed me to get a glimpse into food exchanges and relationship building that are occurring in North Carolina and how they are changing.

Outline of this Thesis

The following chapters in this paper will explore the research I have conducted and my conclusions. The first chapter includes a more indepth survey of *jeong* and why it is so important. I also have a brief introduction of Korean history and a description of the food culture of Korean barbeque in Korea. This is based on what I saw and experience during my time in South Korea, as well as what has been written about it. And finally I show the connection

between Korean bbq and *jeong* which will be the foundation on which I base the research I have done in North Carolina.

The second chapter looks at the function and use of Korean restaurants to the Korean community and how this is unique to North Carolina. It also shows a stark comparison between what is found in mainstream South Korea and what is present in North Carolina. I examine the role of Korean markets and stores for the Korean community and what is happening beneath the surface at these locations. I also look how the Korean community uses these places, but there is still something absence from these experiences that creates the need for the creation of a new form of bbq.

Finally, my third chapter shows how a third place has been established for Korean barbeque in North Carolina and the new meanings and experiences that come with this. It particularly looks at how Koreans living in North Carolina create new environments and situations to maintain their own Korean food traditions in the home. I look at how the home attempts to replicated Korean bbq experiences from Korea and how they are evolving and changing in the private sphere. I end with an conclusion which summarizes this project and the findings from my research.

Chapter 1 *Jeong* and Korean BBQ

My paper examines the link of food and relationship building within the Korean immigrant community in North Carolina. I use the example of Korean BBQ and the restaurants serving it as a window into the ways in which Korean immigrants create communal spaces similar to those they produce and used in Korea. I argue many Koreans feel a need to replicate

familiar and pleasurable Korean practices of long term relationship building in the US. Understanding this concept *jeong,* which many Koreans argue is central in understanding Korean relationships, adds a more complete dimension to this. It is an example of the value accorded to certain cultural categories, and the concern that immigrants feel in unfamiliar spaces. Korean BBQ and categories like *jeong* become intertwined in interesting ways that requires an in depth analysis of both people's experiences and their reflexive understanding. Therefore, a close ethnographic analysis of both *jeong* and Korean BBQ is necessary to understand the ways that they come into play in North Carolina.

Brief History of Korea

Jeong is a term that many Koreans say is unique to Korea and Koreans. Terms like *jeong* often bear important historical and social context, and are used to define a country's boundaries and culture. It is necessary to be acquainted with a broad history of Korea in order to understand why Koreans consider this as something unique to them. Contemporary Korean scholars and popular discoveries emphasize the history of a Korean civilization that can be traced as far back to 2000 BCE. This is a source of national pride, particularly the idea that Korea has been a sovereign state with control of its own boundaries. Popular discoveries point to Golden ages such as those under King Sejong[3] provided Korea with their own writing systems for their language, and many accomplishments such as the movable metal typing press[4], floor heating, and the coveted Korean celadon pottery.

[3] King Sejong ruled from 1418 to 1450
[4] This moving printing press was invented in 1234, predating European printing by two hundred years

However, there are other historical discoveries that run counter to this. Because the Korean peninsula is in a very strategic location in between China, Russia, and Japan, many countries have fought for its land and resources. As a result, Korea attempted to protect itself by instituting isolationist policies until the US began to break down these policies in 1876 (Caprio 2011, 14). Due to Korea's lack of allies and unwillingness to yield to European powers and other Asian nations eventually forced Korea to sign many unequal and harmful treaties that opened the country up to foreign influence (Caprio 2011, 14). After the Japanese empire defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, the US mediated Japan's colonization of Korea. Korea was compelled to sign over in the Taft-Katsura Agreement and Japanese forces quickly invaded and overthrew the Korean government in 1905 (Halpin 2013). By 1910, the Korean government was disestablished, and a Japanese colonial state was installed in its place (Caprio 2011, 82). During this time, the Japanese government attempted to destroy sites and practices that separated Korea from Japan in the minds of its new citizens, force the colonial subjects to assimilate to Japanese forces. Japanese became the new official language, Korean hairstyles were illegal, new institutions were in place everywhere that promoted Japan (Caprio 2011, 169).

Korea remained a Japanese colony throughout World War II, creating deep scars that persist to this day. The Japanese forces, took many young Korean women into China where they were forced to be sex workers for their soldiers. Because of social stigma and erasure from the Japanese government, this crime is still a subject of contention for both countries (Kaneko and Kelly 2018). After Japan surrendered to the US, Korea thought that it would be free, and was for a very short time. But the growing Cold War created fears that the Soviet Union would invade and take over the Korean peninsula. Americans Dean Rusk and Colonel Charles Bonesteel

created the plan of dividing Korea into two countries along the 38th parallel, where the Soviet Union and America would each support one side (Fry 2018). Unfortunately, their unwillingness to eventually reunify the two countries led to the Korean War, which lasted from 1950 to 1953 (Fry 2018). The land was destroyed on both sides which created an economy that was in shambles after the fighting ended. Because the conflict ended with an armistice, North and South Korea are still technically at war. South Korea had to rebuild its infrastructure and went through significant conflict as it struggled to modernize the nation. Harsh working conditions in factories, heavy censorship and repressive government rule, and the attempt to acquire American dollars from US military bases still stationed in Korea, made post-war Korea a very difficult environment to thrive in (Nam 2013).

Today Korea is considered to be an extremely technologically advanced country still struggling with this history of both pain and power. Over 90% of its population have internet access and Korea has the world's fastest internet speeds (Ramirez 2018). Rapid economic growth has propelled South Korea to be a major exporter of culture, and technological products; despite its continuing division, contemporary South Koreans believe it to be a stable and preferred place to live. It is in the contour of this history that Korean immigration into the US must be understood.

Everything from kimbap to K-pop has been traveling outside of South Korea's borders because of increasingly interconnected world. Media, global trade, and transportation improvements all create easier passages for Korean products to take hold in America. Korean culture has never been as popular world wide as it is right now. Korean singers like BTS are winning international awards for their music, and Park Chan-wook's acclaimed films *The*

Handmaiden and *Oldboy* have given him respect as not just a great Korean director, but a great director. And, products such as Samsung's smart phones and refrigerators are now commonplace everywhere in the world. This change can also be seen on the microscale within North Carolina and the triangle area. It is becoming increasingly common to find Korean owned and operated businesses in the Triangle area, specifically with markets and restaurants. There have also been an increase in Korean churches with signs of English and Hangul lettering announcing a new immigrant community in the area. These aspects of Korean migration become more important when discussing how Korean families and individuals are interacting with Korean businesses and Korean ways of life in the landscape of North Carolina .

Defining *Jeong*

Korean migrants have been forced to reconsider how their Korean notions of relationships fit into the American concepts of interrelationship management. Finding a middle ground where Korean ideas and ways of thinking can interact productively with a society which knows little to nothing about them, is one of the challenges which many Koreans face. In Korea there is a set of systems and social rules that are in place which help define and control how relationships are classified. They are culturally context sensitive and are used daily in every interaction with other Koreans around them. There are certain terms of endearment that are used between friends such as "little brother" and many unofficial holidays in a relationship which require small gift exchange. These social norms are heavily relied on, and so when Koreans move to the US, they are surrounded by people who follow and know a completely different set of social rules governing how to create and maintain long term relationships. For this reason it is

often difficult for immigrants to navigate these new, unspoken rules, when they have their own pre-existing norms.

One Korean word that comes up when talking to people about interpersonal relationships is "*jeong*", which is a broad term used to encompass how a Korean would feel about a very close friend. It is a type of connection or affection that Koreans can have with one another. Koreans do not have to have *jeong* with all of their friends or even all of their extended family: it can be a category reserved for only the closest kinds of connections. Many Koreans argue that defining *jeong* is very difficult to articulate, but it is something that as a Korean you are suppose to understand in practice. I have been told as a comparison, it is like asking "What is love?" While many people have described love in a variety of ways through song, poem, movies, books, etc., there are many different ways and experiences that people have with love. Like love, there are just as many experiences of *jeong*. Almost every interviewee, when asked directly about what *jeong* is, had to pause and reflect on this question and would stutter with a reply. "I would say that it is something that you feel rather than define in words…" was a common response. Koreans have *jeong* in many different types of relationships, whether they are romantic, platonic, or familial. One person told me of a story that he thought relayed what *jeong* is best.

> "Its best to describe by way of a story someone told me...this is someone who lived in Korea for a long time and also had a Korean friend in Hawaii when he was down there going to school...And he would call his friend hyung[5]...and ask his friend, "Can I borrow your car?", because he didn't have a car at the time. And so he asked him several times and his friend would say "Yeah, you can take it and just bring it back". You known every time he brought the car back he would fill it up with gas just to be polite, just like we would all usually do. And maybe the fourth or fifth time he

[5] Hyung (형) is a word that a younger brother would use for an older brother. It can also be term of endearment in Korea that a male will use for an older male who is like family, such as here.

> said, “Hey hyung, can I borrow your car?” And he said “Yeah, you can borrow my car, but if you bring it back again with filling the gas up, your not my dongsaeng[6] anymore, you’re not my little brother, there is no jeong. And that’s what jeong is it means...It’s kind of like how you would treat your parents, right?”

In this example helps us to reach a practical understanding of *jeong*. At the same time, it is worth noting that many of my collaborators report that other non-Korean people cannot know what it is because they have not really experienced it themselves. So even if a non-Korean would say, “I have *jeong* with you”, a Korean could argue that he does not really feel *jeong*, but something else.

As there are many different types of love, there are also many different types of *jeong*. One can have *jeong* in a romantic, platonic, or familial relationships. Koreans who have a lot of *jeong* with friends are considered family members or as extended family. Immediate family members always have *jeong* with each other, it is inherently a part of their relationship. To ask if you have *jeong* with your parents would be a ridiculous question for most Koreans. One teacher, Ms. Kim said, “Gradually I have an affection to my students...but I feel that we are getting closer and how can I say, it’s almost like [they are] my children…”. As her explanation goes, *jeong* takes time, and it requires many interactions, and some reciprocation and encouragement from others. In both of these examples, there is an inherent asymmetry in the relationship. One side is suppose to watch over the other in certain circumstances and ways, while the other has a completely different role in the relationship. The biggest comparison is the relationship between siblings is where there is an inherent hierarchy between the older and younger person which carries throughout the decades of their relationship. In a completely different example, James

[6] Dongsaeng (동생) is a word for younger brother than an older brother would use. It also can be used as a term of endearment which is again the case in this context.

and Yoon Lee a couple who moved to Korea together many years ago, talked to me about *jeong* in marriage. "They [are] married, they love each other. But every year it's a little bit less. So we say, 'I live with him only [because of] jeong...that's my love, jeong'" James and Yoon are one of the oldest of my interviewees and have had the most varied experiences with *jeong*. They talked about how *jeong* was a part of their marriage, but also having it with their children, and certain friends and extended family. While this saying was a joke they were telling as kind of a nod to couples being together for a long time, they have this idea *jeong* is the last thing that stays when all else ends a relationship. There was a sense of mutual obligation and connection through *jeong* even when affection may have waned.

Another aspect of this concept included the idea that *jeong* can be felt between people and things. A common example of the would be to have *jeong* with a childhood toy, where there is a strong attachment and devotion over time to that item. An immigration lawyer in the triangle area, John Cho, talked to me one day about the ways in which he understood *jeong*. He knew about *jeong* and supported many of the ideas that I understood about it, but was surprised by this interpretation. After some thought, he accepted this meaning and said, "I haven't heard it described that way before but I can see it, intuitively I can see how they are saying that. It's just an attachment to that particular object…". This response shows how different people have different concepts of *jeong,* but that Koreans find it easy to understand other Korean people's meanings of it, without thinking it as less valid. *Jeong* is also sometimes described as being felt outside of the body and between people, and is thought of as something that can be literally given and received between people (Ka 2008, 191). This could partially be because gift giving is a central theme to practicing *jeong*. For instance, there are many holidays that are similar to

Valentine's Day such as White Day, Pepero Day, Silver Day, etc. And giving food in meals is a common practice to show someone that you are close to them.

Because jeong involves many unspoken social rules, many people have different ideas about what *jeong* means to them. Yet, overall people are very accepting of other Koreans having different definitions. And while there are many different definitions and experiences of *jeong* in the Korean context, the word is a placeholder for the way that they think about relationships and bonds, and how they explain that it is a uniquely Korean concept. They believe that the concept of *jeong* is rooted idea that one has to live in Korea, around Korean people in order to learn and understand what *jeong* is and how to practice it. This could be because of the very long history of Korea being forced to define itself, people, and culture against foreign "others", and the strong force of Japanese colonialism that attacked Korean cultural forms and forced them to identify as Japanese. These two things opposing each other can create a need for Koreans to take back their identity but also to stop others from trying to appropriate it. It creates a line of division between "us" and "them".

Koreans learn about this term through practical experiences. "Korean culture represents a jeong-filled society" so children learn and experience this because of the culture in which they live in, and it is passed through concept learning with actions instead of words (Choi 2010, 53-54; Ka 208, 192). Because of this, *jeong* is both a community orientated and an individual based experience (Ka 2008,189-190). *Jeong* can be created between individuals by spending time with them, giving gifts, or doing favors; and time is thought to have little to no effect on decreasing *jeong* once it has been established. When children learn about *jeong* from living in a Korean society, it is because that society is being maintained and adults and institutions are

creating the conditions which they are saying are natural. But, it is still very much man-made social conditions which create this environment for learning *jeong*.

However, when *jeong* does decrease, it is usually when *jeong* is cut off abruptly and because of something someone did something to severely and negatively affect the relationship. The connection between people is severed immediately and it is difficult to regain *jeong* with that person. When I asked what would be something that would hurt one's *jeong* with someone, everyone had difficulty answering this question immediately. It seems that this is a situation that they do not really think about or at least did not like to think about. Many people did not have specific examples of what would cause this. One person just responded with a brief, "It's bad". To break or harm *jeong* is definitely not a good thing, and I would say, it is somewhat difficult to do and would take long, repeated offenses.

What is also important to note is that of the people that I talked to, most of them said that they could have close relationships with foreigners, but that non-Korean people would not say that the relationship has *jeong*. Whether or not the relationship would have *jeong* from both sides depended on who you talked to. Ms. Kim a Korean language teacher in the triangle area described it as "[jeong is] a kind of sympathy among Koreans...where we feel the same. But with foreigners, she likes me and I like her, but it's a little different." *Jeong* for some Korean becomes more than a type of relationship, but extends to be a knowledge and experience of the country's good and bad times. In this case it also means the experience of a Korean immigrant, and the experience of living and growing up in Korea. For Ms. Kim, *jeong* includes a kind of recognition of understanding that she feels between Korean people who know Korea's history,

culture, and norms. With this in mind, it is also important to look at how *jeong* acts as a cohesive agent within Korea and Korean communities.

There is an aspect of group binding in this concept that elides individual differences and creates a feeling of togetherness (Lyu 2009, 98). Like many other culturally specific categories, *jeong* is something that very few non-Korean people know about, and that some interviewees would say could understand. It is a feeling or experience that people tell me that they automatically relate to with other Korean people they may have never met. In Korea, they know without saying that they have or do not have *jeong* with another person, because of all of the cultural clues that show one's level of *jeong* which are embedded in the everyday actions of people. Language, honorifics, who pours the drinks during a meal, these are all the small actions that key other Koreans into how close people are with one another. In these examples communication can exceed speech and practices and action become just as important with the experience of *jeong*. Because of this, it also acts as an exclusionary process, when there are people who do not know or are expected not to know how to react to Korean practices of gift giving, food exchange, etc.

This idea of *jeong* being specifically Korean, acts as another piece of evidence that shows they are their own nation, and group of people. That they have their own philosophies and way of lifes that other cannot fully understand by others, and that their culture is bounded and defined. This idea that *jeong* is a Korean concept has been marketed by the Korean government, media, and businesses. This can be most clearly seen in one of the most famous snacks in Korea, "Choco Pies". This company has used *jeong* in marketing campaigns for their product. In ads, the message is that when you give someone a Choco Pie, you are giving *jeong* and strengthening

your relationship with that person (Youtube, "초코파이 CF 변천사"). These series of advertisements which ran for several years, shows how the company has used *jeong* as a motivation for people to buy their product and to also associate their product with this national image. The word is even displayed on its packaging, as if it is a guarantee that it is included in the product so that you are literally giving *jeong* to another person[7]. "Choco Pies" is also associating itself with being Korean by relating it to a concept that Koreans believe to be uniquely theirs. By creating this connection, *jeong* has become attached to the Choco Pie in Korean culture and became, on at least a subconscious level, a physical representation of exchanging and wanting to foster *jeong*. Songs have also been written about *jeong*, trying to convey some of the many definitions of this word. "정 때문에" or "Because of Jeong" describes it as being stuck[8] to someone and being tormented (송 대관 1990). This idea of being stuck to a person or have a sticky attachment to someone is one that is used in other Korean sources when trying to translate the word (Klear Textbooks, Intermediate 2). Textbooks teaching Korean language and culture also portray *jeong* as a decidedly Korean concept, describing it as a marker of Koreaness and their culture (Klear Textbooks, Intermediate 2). All of these different interpretations and situations that *jeong* is used in, show the powers it has in reinforcing bonds just by knowing it, whether it is to connect with most of the Korean population for sales or to integrate foreigners into Korean society and culture.

However, this can also work in a very negative way, with certain groups being seen as not having *jeong*, or unable to have *jeong*. For instances, because of the difficult and painful history of Japanese colonization, there has been created a deep-seated anger between these two

[7] Interestingly enough, the company uses the Chinese character 情 instead of the Korean 정 for *jeong* on the packaging and in the commercials

[8] The phrase here is "끈끈한 정때문에" or "because of sticky jeong"

groups. And therefore, many Koreans would say that the Japanese cannot understand and/or do not have *jeong*. In this respect it becomes taboo not to have or understand *jeong* because that means that you are not Korean and therefore a threat, and so *jeong* further defines the differences between two groups who have already situated themselves in opposition. Ideas like *jeong* were also much harder for the Japanese to take away from Koreans during their colonization, so this would have been one of the ideas that people would have held on to to differentiate themselves under the Japanese and remember their history as their own country. I believe that this absence of *jeong* can also be seen with certain groups within the Korean ethnicity. For instance, many North Korean refugees have difficulty integrating into South Korean society, partially because of discrimination from South Koreans. This kind of unwillingness to connect or identify with North Koreans, acts as an exemption to the rule of the Koreaness of *jeong*. This example shows us how perhaps some Koreans can lose *jeong*, or this term is privileged for a specific type of Korean, or can only be used within similar communities of Koreans. These discrepancies show how *jeong* can be used to reinforce group dynamics and also to distance individuals and other groups.

However, there are several indicators that *jeong* is not uniquely a Korean idea or even term. There is a Chinese character for *jeong,* 情, which means "heart", "vulnerability", and/or "something arising". Even the Japanese word, 人情 which means compassion has links to the idea of *jeong*. While many Koreans would like to think that no other cultures or community has *jeong* because it is a Korean term, there are similar words and concepts in countries like China and Japan. However, the debate of who has the "authentic" *jeong* is not what I am exploring, and just because this concept may not be uniquely Korean, it does not disregard the fact that many Koreans think of it as so, and use it to explain their day to day experiences.

Why *Jeong* is Important

Recent findings have looked at how *jeong* is linked to mental illness in migrant populations. In Lyu's study, he found that immigrants who move outside of Korea, feel like they have lost *jeong* with others. "I often hear from Korean immigrants that they miss the relationships that they had prior to immigration which fostered a sense of communal connection through *jeong*" (Lyu 2009, 21). This impacts their mental health because they feel like they are not creating deep, long term relationships in their lives. When one cannot exchange *jeong*, people can feel resentment, isolation, loneliness, anxiety, and depression (Lyu 2009, 193). When studying immigrant communities, these feelings become especially important when looking at how isolated or integrated an immigrant community or individual is. While *jeong* may or may not be something that is only Korean, the fact remains that Koreans find importance in describing their relationships with this term, and that this experience is something a lot of immigrants have trouble cultivating in a new country. Another scholar, Jun Yoo looks at mental illness during the colonial period of Korea, and how sometimes both deviant behavior and mental illness can be contributed to a lack of emotional attachment or *jeong*. Yoo looks at how *jeong* can work against or with the collective group mentality of Korea which views the nation or the Korean community first, and the individual second (Yoo 2016, 85). Many times the individual will need to sacrifice their needs or wants for the larger group in which they are a part of. This group mentality is also something that rests in opposition to the neoliberal policies that dominant US domestic and foreign policy. In the US, the individual is encouraged to rely on themselves and not the people around them.

In Korea, there are many different ways to create and maintain *jeong* between people. These manifest themselves in holidays, products, and places which have a partial function to help sustain the nation's *jeong*. Korean BBQ and Korean food is one of the main ways to build these relationships. Thus there is a strong connection between food and *jeong*, practice and feeling. Because most Korean meals are structured in a communal fashion, it is very rare that Korean people eat alone, and do so is often seen as a cultural taboo. Therefore, while Lyu's study made the connection between *jeong* and isolation, I would say that the loss of such communal structures such as Korean BBQ is one of the reasons why isolation and loneliness is higher in the population she was studying. Yoo also refers to drinking parties or 술자리 where *jeong* is reinforced and maintained by bonding in social gatherings such as these. With the absence of these native systems in the US such as communal eating, Koreans have to either create new systems to fill this void, recreate old systems, or live without them. By doing any one of these processes, they are redefining the environment around the and the ways in which relationships are formed within Korean immigrant communities. Because *jeong* is so present in the day to day process of eating, the differences of eating Korean food in America, change the way *jeong* is being experiences and implemented as well.

Korean BBQ

Today, Korean barbeque is usually eaten in restaurants, but it is so simple to make that most Korean families can cook it. In a Korean barbeque restaurant, there is a grill in the middle of the table which is used for grilling your own meat and other food and side dishes. You order whichever meat you want to eat, the most popular types of Korean barbeque is pork belly,

marinated beef, and short ribs. The raw meat and side dishes come out altogether and then someone starts cooking the meat on the table grill. Overall, Korean barbeque is relatively consistent throughout Korea with the quality of meat and food or the fuel for the grill changing. Within this unique restaurant model there is one rule that is consistent in every Korean barbeque restaurant that I have ever come across, and that is that you need to have at least two people to order Korean barbeque. They will not let only one person order barbeque, so going to eat Korean barbeque becomes a very communal activity between friends, co-workers, or family. Who cooks the barbeque, how much each person eats, and how it is eaten have deep significance because Korean barbeque requires so much interaction and dependence on each other to have an enjoyable meal. For instance, you should never pour your own drink, and you should never let your friend's drink be empty. This shows that you are being attentive and taking care of them. Another social rule in barbeque is that you should always give the best pieces of meat to the elder at the table, and make sure that they don't run out of dishes. Another social cue for strong relationships is that Koreans will often put food on people's plates as a sign of respect and care. In romantic relationships, couples will sometimes feed each other. John Cho says that " I think definitely that [this] is part of a more complete relationship that includes jeong...giving someone a snack, giving someone any kind of food, I think Koreans associate it, my wife definitely associates it with caring". This is why the marketing strategy of "Choco Pies" was so successful, was because *jeong* can be the very act of buying someone food. Therefore, Korean barbeque in this setting becomes a very good method of creating and maintaining *jeong* between people. Korean barbeque is often seen in Korean TV shows, movies, and books as a symbol of community and relationships. It is often the setting of drunken confessions, or beginning of

relationships between boss and employee or rivals. Mr. Choi, a middle-age businessman, told me that, “If your boss says that he wants to get barbeque, you can’t say no!” This is because you want to become closer to your boss, to develop *jeong*, and if you deny that invitation then you have will have trouble developing that relationship in the future. With all of this context, we can now see how differences in the United States restaurants and markets can change the dynamics and very goal of the meal itself.

The next chapter will deal with Korean restaurants, markets, and cafes in North Carolina that all take part in a version of Korean barbeque and what these changes and consistencies means in terms of creating relationships within communities.

Chapter 2: The Public

Place, Action and Theory

Because *jeong* is so reliant on gift giving, how and where these kinds of actions are taking place is important to examine. In North Carolina, one of the most prominent Korean food to enter the US markets is Korean bbq, and so many new restaurants focused on Korean bbq have appeared. One reason that I believe this specific Korean food has been more accepted than others such as kimbap or kimchi, is because of the very strong and passionate love of bbq in North Carolina. For many Carolinians, even if they know very little about Korea, they can recognize the idea of barbeque and are more willing to try it. Therefore, because Korean bbq sounds more familiar than other hangul words, and has become a more common item on menus in the state.

In Asian fusion restaurants, such as Spicy 9 in Chapel Hill, variations Korean bbq has been added to their regular menu. Other Korean restaurants such as Bonchon, a Korean chain restaurant that specializes in Korean fried chicken, has Korean bbq on the menu. Even in restaurants with seemingly little to no connection to Korea are featuring Korean food such as Noodles and Company and their Korean Meatballs and Korean spicy noodles. These places are becoming more common and demanded in restaurants. In television and pop culture, food shows are giving a spot light to Korean bbq. Netflix's new show *Ugly Delicious* starring David Chang a Korean-American chef, looks that the various forms of bbq in the US and also at the emergence of Korean bbq. As someone who has grown up in the US, he connects the two very different types of bbq (Korean and southern) and questions how Korean bbq will continue to grow and gain popularity in the United States.

This creates an interesting image of Korean bbq in North Carolina, where there is more variation that under the label of Korean bbq in comparison to what is seen in Korea. Bulgogi may be named as such in menus in NC, but often times, it is also called Korean bbq. This variation can lead to confusion between Koreans/Korean-Americans and others who may have different ideas and experiences of Korean bbq. While this part of Korean culture has become more popular in North Carolina and in America overall, because there is so much variation, Korean bbq can also works in ways where there are certain places that Koreans sees as more "authentic" or which are the best restaurant to go to. Certain places are avoided while others may be used for specific occasions. Therefore, by looking in-depthly at what is happening at certain Korean bbq restaurants, there are patterns which emerge that show what each place accomplishes

and succeeds at when replicating a specific Korean experience as well as what people feel are lacking at these places.

For this reason and more, the places in which Korean bbq is being sold and eat, plays a unique role in the production and maintenance of relationship and therefore *jeong*. As we have seen in the last chapter, *jeong* relies a lot of giving and action. Nancy Munn is an anthropologist who emphasizes the role of action between people in the process of gift-giving. Her ideas use the foundation of Mauss who looks at how gift-giving is a circular process defining, refining, and continuing relationships (Graeber 2001, 45). Gifts can be given but there is always something that is returned in that exchanged of equal or greater value in order for the relationship to continue. So there are certain obligations in gift-giving which commit those involved to act a certain way. Time, place, and prestige all play an important role in the different dimensions of gift exchange and must all be taken into consideration. And relationships between people are affected by gift-giving because "the object are never completely separated from the [people] who exchange them" (Mauss 1967, 31). Mauss talks about how in his research in New Zealand with the Hau, the spirit of the gift or the value is a part of the donor's soul that becomes a part of the gift and but be reciprocated and eventually given back (Mauss 1967, 154). And this is usually because certain memories or understandings are attached to the gift or in the specific process of the exchange.

This idea relates to *jeong* or the Korean framework of relationships in two main ways. One is because Koreans can visually place *jeong* in a object, such as a Choco Pie or a childhood teddy bear. The relationship or *jeong* that one has with that person is connected through that object because the concept is constructed to be viewed and felt this way. Places, things, and

senses all play a role in reconstructing memories of things such as relationships with people. And because many Koreans see *jeong* as being able to physically hold a space, Mauss' concept aptly relates. The second reason, is the idea of processes. As we have seen, the actions and details of barbeque are important and very meaningful. Both Mauss and Munn explain how the process itself helps create the relationships involved in the exchange. One popular way to "exchange" barbeque is by making a lettuce wrap to give to someone else or linking arms and eating a wrap. Usually this is done in a romantic or comedic way, but this exchange of barbeque is something that people will do with those they feel comfortable around and who they feel they have reached a certain level of their relationship with. The process itself is what is connecting and progresses the relationship and is often used to define the relationship itself. In the same way, the processes can be alienating to other groups of people who are either not allowed to participate in those actions and exchanges or do not understand what happens when those exchanges take place.

This brings us back to Nancy Munn, who says that value emerges in action, where the production of social relations requires an investment of human time and energy, intelligence, and concern (Graeber 2001, 45). So for Munn the value is not in the lettuce wrap of the barbeque that you bought, but that its value as a object that is exchanged would rest in the fact you have the power to create this exchange and therefore, social relations (Graeber 2001, 47). Munn uses the terms "potencies" or "transformative potential" to talk about how people have these abilities that are virtually invisible, to create and value their own actions and those of others.

She also talks about how sometimes, the pathways that are created by these potentials can go dormant. Maybe time and place has separated relationships and the gift-giving exchange is stopped or the people's potencies are being used. In these cases, the pathways or relationship

may go dormant, but they will never be gone (Graeber 2001, 47). This can happen as long as someone remembers and can activate them. This is also very similar to the idea that *jeong* will survive anything as long nothing is done to severely and negatively affect the relationship. This is similar to old friends being able to pick up where they left off after years of separation.

Marshall Sahlins looks that the importance of place, or really the absence of it. Relating his idea back to the Hau of New Zealand, this spirit of the gift is thought to have come from a sacred grove and that this hau of the earth has to also be eventually returned. It is interesting to consider *jeong* in light of Sahlins observations, since the concept of *jeong* is so closely bound to the idea of Korea and Koreanness, what happens when this concept leaves the country? Over time, the connection that *jeong* has to Korea fades, and so what does that turn into then? One answer can be seen by looking at Korean bbq restaurants, and how Korean's experience of *jeong*-at least in a Korean bbq setting- changes with the move to North Carolina.

Many of the restaurants that are selling Korean bbq are creating unique environments that change the dynamics of relationship building from what is known in Korea. In my research I look at three distinct places that sell Korean bbq in three very different ways. This is to highlight not only the variation of what gets to be defined as Korean bbq, but also how all of these places are used by Korean immigrants in different ways. What I hope to show is that through similarities that reminisce on Korean culture and homeland and through the differences that are created by being in the US, Korean immigrants have a new experience of how they create and maintain relationships and therefore, new experience of *jeong*.

Seoul Garden

I decided to first explore a restaurant that was the most similar and familiar to the Korean bbq that I ate in South Korea. So I went to Raleigh, to visit Seoul Garden. This restaurant is by far the most similar to the Korean idea of bbq, because of the atmosphere and system that they have there. This is because Seoul Garden is set up so that at almost all of the tables there is a built-in grill which customers use to grill their own meat and vegetables. Side dishes are brought out along with all of the utensils that are usually used to cook the meet, and it is up to the customers to prepare and create their own dinner. They also have the rule of having to have more than 2 people in order for the table to order Korean bbq. This was one of the few places that had Korean music playing all of the times that I visited, which is one of the small but meaningful characteristics of restaurants who may have trouble marketing their restaurant towards their own community versus the larger non-Korean community. You could tell that the restaurant had strong ties to the surround Korean community because of this music choice, the Korean wait staff, and the Korean newspaper they had at the entrance.

Visiting with one of my friends Jennie, we came with a group of five others who had never eaten Korean bbq before. Because Jennie is Korean-American and grew up in a Korean household, she was able to converse with the staff in Korean and was very knowledgeable about all of the different food options and the structure of the meal. We talked to our friends about the types of meat we could get, how much, the side dishes. There was a sense of ritual and rules that Jennie and I knew about and were apt to follow. Things such as the places we should sit at the table to grill, that we knew how much we should get for the number of people who came, positions ourselves so that we were taking care of them by cooking and making sure they had everything they needed for the meal.

Our friends really enjoyed it and said that they wanted to do it again, but there were moments during the dinner when me Jennie knew what certain actions or things meet in the deeper Korean context, that no one else at the table understood unless we told them. Even though I had very deep relationships with everyone at the table, the Korean bbq and all of the contexts that go with it created a new language or set of actions that only me and Jennie were able to take part in. And that is one of the deeper contexts that Korean bbq carries with it, among Koreans and how it relates to *jeong*. Yes, relationships can be built through many different types of actions and by eating any kind of food, but the process of Korean bbq is heavily ladened with so many small meanings and actions that are culturally specific that it can become an exclusionary process when others are a part of it. There has to be a will to teach and show others how things are done (how to cook the meat, what side dishes you can grill, how to wrap the meat in the lettuce) that is the etiquette of the meal, but then there are the set of unspoken hierarchies that invade the meal. Giving pieces of meat to certain people, who is cooking the meat, who decides what to order, and how paying for the meal works. This is very similar to the idea that *jeong* can quickly change from a bonding concept to a dividing or alienating notion.

With all of these similarities to Korean bbq however, Seoul Garden also deviates from the typical Korean barbeque restaurant by having other meals that you can order instead of bbq and you have the option to get your own dish. There were a rare, few that came to the restaurant during lunch by themselves, and ordered for themselves, and did not partake in the ritual of Korean bbq or the exchange and creation of *jeong*. Usually Korean bbq restaurants mainly focus on bbq and while they offer complimentary dishes to be eaten with the bbq, the menu is not made to be for individual people.

With all of these similarities though, I was surprised to find that many of my participants that I talked to who lived in the Triangle area, said that Seoul Garden was not the ideal place to go for Korean barbeque. Ms. Kim, the Korean teacher said "[It's] too expensive, they [are] very expensive and also the taste is not that good. So I usually make it at home. It's pretty good, but the quality of meat [there] is not so good". And when I went I understood. So-ju which is almost always ordered with Korean barbeque was well over eight dollars a bottle, while in Korea, one can buy it at a convenience store for a little over a dollar. In addition, it is difficult to have the same Korean bbq meal as often when the meat is more expensive, so the occasion and opportunities for some Korean immigrants is hindered by this price range. And finally, for Ms. Kim and for others, the meat and taste is not worth the price, so it is a less sought after restaurant for some Korean immigrants and community members to visit. In this way, other restaurants and places have attempted to fill in this gap with different variations or through other means.

Namu 나무

A recent and surprising restaurant that captured my interest was a new restaurant/cafe that opened in between Chapel Hill and Durham called Namu. This restaurant was particularly interesting to me because it has just opened in the last year and it quickly became a huge favorite of the Chapel Hill and Durham communities. This was a little surprising to me due to the fact of its hidden location and the fact a Korean restaurant on Franklin Street, less than 10 minute drive away shut down a few months previous. But this restaurant which was established by two Korean food truck owners has thrived on selling its Korean bbq styled food.

This restaurant is very different from Seoul Garden in the sense that it does not serve Korean bbq with the grill in the middle of the table and provides meat that you need to prepare. Instead it is a restaurant where you order the Korean bbq, then find a table and wait for your food to be prepared and brought out to you. The Korean bbq options that they have are beef, pork, spicy pork, and chicken. All of these come already cook and are chopped up in a more North Carolinian styled bbq. Even though their menu says Korean bbq, it more closely resembles bulgogi which is meat that is marinated and then cooked. The meals are also portioned for only one person so that it is less common to see people sharing their meals with one another. It cuts off an important source of relationship building which is found in the structure of Korean bbq. The ability and opportunity to share and literally prepare someone's food for them, is not available here and those actions are redirected so that the closest thing to sharing is eating off of someone else's plate. All of the nuanced actions that can be performed with typical Korean bbq are taken away in this setting, and instead the restaurant mainly functions as a place to talk and socialize. Even though the food is not in the communal, family style there are still activities in the restaurant which can replicate those with meanings of care and thoughtfulness. Water, utensils, sauces, napkins, etc all have to be picked up by the customers. In a group people would offer to get all of the things they needed and through action and potentials were able to recreate a small aspect of Korean bbq.

Another thing that the restaurant does is offer a lot a food options for Koreans and non-Koreans. There are very spicy food like many Korean dish, or things such as bbq burrito bowl which would be more familiar with people who are not aware of Korean food culture. There are also side dishes which are a staple of Korean meals. It was interesting however to see

that the side dishes where in English but were Korean words, so that *geem* or *chon* would be incomprehensible to people who did not know Korean food and/or Korean. These kinds of menu characteristics, create an interesting boundary that was also seen in Seoul Garden. There is an attempt to appeal to two different demographics or audiences, which suggests that there are two different wants. One demographic is the non-Korean community which the restaurant needs in order to continue to grow and to reach new possibilities of income. This group needs something that is familiar yet new and exciting. Namu often a modern, comfortable setting with low American music, bbq that is familiar looking and tastes different, but not completely new. On the other hand, the restaurant wants to be a place for the Korean population in the Durham-Chapel Hill area. When if first opened, Ms Kim said that she had not been yet, but that the owners went to her church and that she knew them. The restaurant has the option of traditional Korean flavors, and the traditional sides, and they also stock Korean snacks and drinks.

While Namu has less of the ritual of Korean bbq, it is still able to create a social space that allows for Koreans to come, converse, and create connections which others. The space reminded me of the many cafes that can be found in Seoul, which are hot spots for meetings, studying or casual conversations. A lot of college students come here to study, especially from Duke and Chapel Hill, but it is also a social space where families or large parties can have dinner. Even though the restaurant can be very crowded, at slower times around 3:00 or 4:00, you can hear customers talking in Korean or the owners talking in Korean.

This restaurant is an example of a hybrid mix of Korean bbq. Where not only does the food become an interesting combination of American and Korean such as the burrito bowl or kimchi fries, but it also combines American and Korean restaurant environments. It has been

very interesting to see how this restaurant has grown from its opening. I went there on its first day and saw how they have changed their operation and also how people have interacted with and used it. When I first went to the restaurant, there were some Korean customers, but it was still very new and just had food. Since then, they have had to lease out more of the building because it had become so busy. People started to use it as a social and work space and as a public space where they can speak Korean, eat at a Korean restaurant, and support the Korean community.

H-Mart

My final restaurant that I researched was H-Mart in Cary. This store functions as a market, food court, postal office, makeup counter, fish market, and bakery. It is almost like walking into a small shopping mall, if it was just for food. Not only do they sell a variety of foreign foods that can be difficult to find, but they also sell all of the tools. Kimchi fridges, stove tops, chopsticks, pots, all also available so that customers can recreate their favorite dishes at home. While the food market of H-mart is very varied and has many ethnic foods, H-Mart is a Korean company that specifically targets the Korean population. All of the food names and descriptions in the produce section are written in English, and then Hangul/Korean, and finally some products would have Chinese below that. All of their coupon books are also written in Korean and their Korean appliances, makeup counter, and bakery all showcase Korean products.

In the food court you are overwhelmed by over 6 restaurants. It works in a strikingly similar way to a cafeteria that I went to while I was in Korea. There is one counter that you order all of your food from and then you go to pick up your food from the specific counter of the restaurant where you ordered. The menus all have both Korean and English even if it is food

from the Japanese or Thai restaurants. Just like in a cafeteria, you will find your own table and get your own drinks. However this aspect of the system makes it so that most of the time, all of the participants of the meal work together to get ready for the food, by moving around tables, and getting everything they need. The food also comes in very large portions so that it is very common for a table to share their food family style. However, while H-Mart does serve a version of Korean bbq, it is more similar to Namu's than to Seoul Garden's version. However, this dish is specifically made to feed more than one person, so it still attempts to retain the communal, sharing aspect of typically Korean bbq.

The H-mart cafeteria/food court/restaurants are comprised of Korean, Japanese, and Thai foods. A person could order something from each place in one order, which accommodates large groups and families. Few people come to H-mart to eat alone, which is an interesting contrast to the usual lonesome chore of grocery shopping. But H-mart attracts a lot of families and groups to its restaurants which creates a more social and communal atmosphere in comparison to the grocery store. The store itself blurs the line between the household/private and the public spheres, work and fun. I saw more families eating together here than either Seoul Garden or Namu. Since the store is owed and marketed towards the Korean population of Cary, a large number of its customers are from that community, but Indian, Chinese, and even Russian groups can be seen visiting and eating in the store. It is very common to hear 3 or more language while eating in the restaurant are or walking around the store. H-Mart is a place where the many people in the Korean community feel comfortable talking in Korean with each other or to the staff. And because it is marketed towards other foreign foods and groups, other communities feel welcome and comfort in the environment to talk about food in their own language.

The food court is the main social area in the store and is described as “Authentic Korean food for Everyone”. This title itself is very welcoming, but is burdened with the promise of having “authentic” Korean food. What that means to certain Koreans and Korean groups is very different, but the idea that there is one “authentic” version of Korean food overall lends itself to the idea of a homogenous, and completely unified country with one culture which can be spread and exchanged with others.

What is Missing?

It all three of these restaurants, Korean bbq is recreate and/or reconstructed in this North Carolinian setting. While Seoul Garden is more similar to typical Korean bbq, others use it as a foundation to create a space that is more accessible to the Korean community, but is still unable to replicate the intricacies of action and exchange in the ritual of Korean bbq. The cost, distance, and quality of the meal get in the way of Koreans being able to benefit and enjoy the meal as they could in Korea. What is interesting is that these changes in the restaurant food and environment are not the final stages of its evolution. But instead a new third place has emerged for Korean bbq in North Carolina that is more rarely seen in Korea. The home, or private stage, has become the favorite for Koreans to recreate their own personal experience of Korean bbq. For many Korean immigrants, the struggles of finding the balance of the best bbq and the best experience, requires that they take on many of the tasks of the meal themselves. While it is not unheard of to make bbq at your home, it is done less than just going to a restaurant. Especially in and around Seoul. But the absense or unfulfilled potential in the Korean bbq restaurants, creates the need for a third space to encapture the spirit of giving in this meal.

Chapter 3: The Private

The Home

While restaurants and public areas are able to encapsulate some of the feelings and experiences of bbq in Korea, there are aspects that have not been or cannot be recreated in these spaces. Because of costs, atmosphere, or location, Korean bbq restaurants do not have all of the same aspects of those that are typically found in Korea. Sahlins would say that there is not a space for the *jeong* to return to and therefore, there is a need for a space to be create. And in order for *jeong* to feel the same, people need to feel like there is a space that can maintain and accept this same feeling of *jeong*. For some Korean immigrants, this also means recreating the food that they ate in Korea, and with limited restaurant options and/or cost restrictions, Korean bbq has to be made at home or not at all. John remembers his mother fixing Korean bbq because his father and him both loved eating it. His mother ended up cooking it at home a lot. One mother said that they would rather cook Korean bbq at home for other reasons. "[Seoul Garden] is very expensive and also the taste is not that good. So I usually make it at home. It's pretty good, but the quality of meat is not so good". She says how the Korean bbq at that restaurant is just not the same quality as what she wants so she decides to just make it herself so that her family can have the types of meat they want. Other people just prefer to only eat at home. A couple from the triangle area said that they must rather eat at home, and the husband even calls his wife, the expert of Korean cooking in their home. Their daughter also likes her mother's bbq better than any restaurant she has tried in the Triangle area because of the marinade that her family uses. This is why places such as H-Mart are able to thrive and succeed in Cary. Many

Korean immigrants would rather eat bbq at home that they prepare themselves. They are able to have more control over the costs, create the atmosphere that they want for the event, and prepare their favorite foods that may or may not be offered at restaurants. For these reasons Korean bbq has a much stronger presence in the home and it has become one of the best places to eat this communal meal.

By eating Korean bbq at home more often than at restaurants, new traditions and experiences are created over time. For second-generation Korean-Americans, Korean bbq becomes more of a household food because that is where they are used to eating it most of the time. Some people have carried on this Korean bbq tradition into their own households. John who is a lawyer in the Triangle area talked about how he eats Korean bbq with his wife. They John's wife is the one who usually cooks the meal, and they usually eat Korean bbq at their own house. For him, it reminds him of the bbq that he grew up eating with his parents. John has traveled and lived in Korea after college for a few years, and he found that usually when families eat together, it is during big holiday. Families will cook something more traditional that Korean bbq as bbq is reserved for restaurants and is not usually eaten with families.. Korean bbq is reserved more for co-workers, friends your same age, or dates. Events or get togethers that are more casual. John continues to eat Korean bbq at home with his wife because of the limited options that he has in the Triangle area and because it is something that he prefers now, over going to a restaurant. Second generation Korean-Americans are also carrying on this new traditions and they are changing it as well. One student, Jamie, that I talked to said that she really enjoys making Korean bbq at her house, and inviting friends over to eat. She calls her mom to make sure she gets all of the food necessary for the meal and for the recipes to make it. Jamie

says that her mom also has specific brands that are better than others that her mom tells her to get. “My mom will say ‘no, no that brand tastes not as good, you need to get this one instead’.” Each family has their own rules of what kinds of side dishes they cook and which ingredients to get. A ritual emerges of which market or store to go to, the cooking ware that is used, and the preparation involved. For instance, because the meat is grilled in front of everyone, the grill becomes a focal point of the meal. At some of the Asian markets such as H-Mart, they even have grills that are especially made for use in a house for Korean bbq. There is a ritual of ingredients, process, and objects which is handed down through the generations. Jamie’s recreation of bbq could also be a part of a new cycle of Korean bbq in the US. Younger people wanted to eat bbq with friends their own age, in a setting outside of the one they are usually a part of with their parents. They end up going back to something that is similar to bbq restaurants in Korea. However, as they get older and having families and different groups of friends, cooking Korean bbq at home will most likely change again and there will be a different form of Korean bbq. Because the bbq is taking place in a home, the atmosphere of the meal will largely depend on the atmosphere of the house. While Jamie is in college, her housemates can create a different Korean bbq meal than her parents would with her family. The practices and norms of eating bbq in Korea have changed in their new American contexts so that there are new ideas about what Korean bbq is.

When the practices and setting of Korean bbq change, other aspects of the meal will transform as well. The group of people who usually eat bbq together in Korea are employees, companies, friends. However, when bbq moves from that public context to the household, the group of people will change as well. Other members involved or invited to join the meal, have to

be able to have the meal with the entire family. While Korean bbq is often accompanied with so-ju, and karoke (norabang), this will not happen as often in the American household setting. Therefore, the mood of the meal can change entirely. The meal has the potential and tendency to become more family friendly.. As we have talked about before, *jeong* is thought to inherently exist between family members, therefore the upkeep and actions that would have to occur between friends does not apply as neatly to immediate family members. These relationships need less time specifically set aside to maintain that friendship, because that relationship is inherent in their daily activities and interactions, being constantly reinforced. That is why Korean bbq is a popular way for Koreans to strengthen relationships. It provides a period of time that can be used to focus on the relationships of those involved and a variety of different ways to express many different levels of friendship through the actions found in the meal and the meanings attached to those actions. So, while Korean bbq would be one of the methods used to upkeep relationships with friends or co-workers, it is now being more often used as a family meal.

This year I have been able to see how students are adapting Korean bbq customs to fit their own needs and environment. Jamie and I had eaten at Seoul Garden which was fun and some of our other friends were able to see what the Korean bbq restaurant environment was, but Jamie wanted to eat Korean bbq at her house because the restaurant she felt was not the full experience of Korean bbq. So about a month later, we were able to get together again and fix everything for the meal. Jamie got the meat and the side dishes and I brought the grill. It was a very different experience of bbq than what I was used to in Korea, because we had to do so much to prepare it. But the preparation were part of the bonding activities. We had to chop up all of the vegetables, cook some of the side dishes and unpackage the other ones we bought at the store.

We also had to set up the grill and so clean it up afterwards. Apart from working together to create the meal, it was also very insightful for me to see which side dishes Jamie thought were most important, or the necessary side dishes for the meal. I had not realized that I had my own expectations of certain side dishes, some of which Jamie did not think were as important. She had her own types of sides which she liked, and since I was able to learn what Korean food she likes best with this meal, it made me feel closer to her and understand her and her own traditions better.

While Jamie was mainly the person who was cooking all of the meat, she also made sure that everyone always had enough to eat. And I also knew that it was my job to make sure that she had enough to eat and that all of the side dishes were full. We took on a role of guardianship with the other people involved in the meal because of our relationship with them. We were communicating through food that we cared for each other and that we were willing to invest time with each other. Eating the meal in Jamie's house was different in the fact, that we could be ourselves in private, rather than having to be more restrained at the restaurant. The environment encouraged spending more time together since her house didn't have a closing time, and there were other things that we could do after the meal which kept us together for longer.

The activities and potentials available in houses are different from restaurants. The act of preparation and buying all of the ingredients is an additional set of actions that carry meanings and value to the meal. Following Munn's theory of action and value, household meals could be seen as having more value than its restaurant counterpart. Even though this addition value is present, there is also a opportunity for negative value (Graeber 2001, 83). While there are opportunities for failure in both settings when trying to create friendships, sometimes the house

provides more opportunities for mistakes because some much work is being done by friends or family members. An example is if you eat bbq at a house, not offering or helping prepare the meal, or do not like a certain food. This can be taken personally by the person hosting the meal or in charge of preparing it. There is an opportunity to insult or hurt someone through the meal. In this way, while meals in the home can provide more opportunities for friends to become closer, it also has the risk of breaking or hurting relationships.

Having the meal in one's house, also limits the group of people who will be involved in the meal. There is a certain level of trust and friendship that people have to have with another to invited them into their house. On the other hand, inviting an acquaintance or friend to a restaurant for a meal can be more casual than inviting them to your house, especially if the whole family is involved. This can limit the groups of people who Koreans can feel that have *jeong* with, which could be why a lot of Korean immigrants think that *jeong* is lacking in the US (Lyu 2009, 21). While the household setting is good and maybe even better for maintaining long-term relationships, it is much more difficult to create relationships through this house/family setting. That could be why, Jamie and I took our friends to the Korean bbq restaurant first and then decide to make Korean bbq at home. The restaurant was like an introduction to the meal and then when Jamie saw that they liked and accepted the meal, she wanted to cook it herself for everyone.

Even though the definition and expectations of Korean bbq are become more blurred in the American contexts, these variations provide insights into how Koreans related the meal to their different kinds of relationships. Many Koreans think of *jeong* as having a relationship with a friend that is more similar to a familial bond. The story of the friend who borrows his car many

times, illustrates the giving without the need of receiving between very close friends. The terms between friends, “little brother” or “older sister”, have the same meaning of treating friends as close relatives. Interestingly enough, while Korean bbq is not usually eaten with family members in restaurants in Korea, it is trying to create relationships similar to those between family members. In an American context, people are more likely to eat bbq with family members. So when 2nd or 3rd generation Korean-Americans eat bbq with friends, co-workers, or even their own families, they are establishing family like bonds between those eating the meal, because their experience and original context of the meal is with family members. Blurring the line between family and friend relationship is a part of the concept of jeong and is able to be continued through Korean bbq in this different setting, even if it is influenced by American food culture.

The movement of Korean bbq from the public to the private, the outside to the inside has been occurring in the US. Instead of the restaurant preparing everything and doing the cooking for the side dishes and meat preparation, this will fall to a member of the family. In my research, there was a trend of the women cooking and marinating the meat, however, this could vary from household to household. When Korean bbq comes into the home, a different group are invited into the experience from the people who would meet up at a restaurant. As the meal moves from the public to the private, it contracts to fit into the home. The type of people and the amount of time that people have to invest in the meal decreases as it moves to the private. However, it grows and evolves over time as Korean bbq expands into new definitions and forms.

Korean bbq is now taking on a similar role and feeling of the traditional American cook-out. Korean bbq can now be an event where family friends are invited over for a big

communal dinner between the neighbors and kids are able to play together while the adult are able to converse. The meat becomes prepared or cooked on grills outside and other families are invited over to participate in the process. A Raleigh couple Mr. and Mrs. Kim said that they will often cook Korean bbq for just dinner, but they also now have events where they eat it with their friends and neighbors. “We share with family and for sometimes neighbors on a special day...Having people to the house…”. They also talked a lot about their own special ingredients for marinating the bbq and the specific side dishes that they prepare. The taste and meal itself becomes much more important for them because they are sharing with people outside of the family and it reflects their cooking and interpretation of bbq. The hosting house, is the one incharge of the meal and its cooking, and the meal can quickly become a big event.

This change in the meal is easier and faster with the presence and history of North Carolinian bbq and cookouts. The meat is easier to grilled outside since most houses do not have the smoke hoods or ventilation systems that Korean restaurants are equipped with, and the Korean side dishes replace the sides of coleslaw, baked beans, and mac and cheese. Some Koreans were able to easily identify Korean bbq with North Carolina bbq. They could appreciate the skill that it took in grilling NC and Korean bbq. They liked the different taste and sides, and thought that they were more similar than different. But other Koreans, only saw that the meat was the same and that was where the similarities stopped and the differences began. One person even said that she couldn’t eat some American bbq like baby back ribs, because the taste was so unpleasant to her. Still others, who had grown up in the US and had eaten both Korean bbq at home and American bbq, saw both bbqs as an extension of the same thing, a way to share a meal with others and strengthen relationships in the process. The type of bbq played less of a role to

them, than who they were actually eating it with. In addition, as is the taboo of Korean bbq, there were certain kinds of American bbq that they also thought you should also not eat alone. Places like Cookout or Smithfields were fine to grab by yourself, but eating at local bbq restaurants such as the Backyard BBQ or The Pit, were places that were more of a group or shared meal. This could be because of the portion size or the higher quality of food, but the time, quality, and environment of these two smaller bbq restaurants created a better space to grow relationships for them.

Similarly, many Koreans are finding that their own homes are offering better places to cultivate the kinds of relationships that they want in comparison to restaurants. And a way to do this both within and outside of the Korean community is through a hybrid of the American and Korean bbq tradition. In the same way that Korean bbq restaurants combine aspects of both cultures when selling Korean bbq, the household meal can be similarly affected. While the ingredients may be able to stay the same, the process and atmosphere of the meal can be presented in more of an American style than a purely Korean one. In the examples of the three restaurants for Korean bbq, the atmosphere and/or design of the restaurant itself, had a lot of similarities to places in Korea, but the food itself was more of a hybrid. However, in the home setting the opposite occurs where the food less of a hybridization, but the setting is changed.

Conclusion

Over the course of my research, I have been able to see how Korean bbq has moved from a public setting in Korea, to experiments of sustainable Korean restaurants in North Carolina, to a stable home setting for Korean bbq. The Korean community in North Carolina experimented

with Korean bbq and found that the private domain can also be productive in recreating the space and atmosphere of the meal even if there are some barriers of the people invited or the addition of activities. For many, this also means recreating the same feeling of *jeong* that occurs within these meals and at the private setting in North Carolina, Korean immigrants feel successful in creating a space where *jeong* can return and survive with them in their new home. Even though the having Korean bbq in the house may have come from necessity of time, cost, and resources, the Korean community here has been able to make it into something that has become a tradition of its own. This new form of Korean bbq will continue to grow and evolve with the needs of the community that uses it to recreate cultural ideas and feelings in America. My research points to the beginning of a cycle or path that where the private setting of the home is beginning to invite others to the meal there. It is re-creating and maintaining the social bonds and feeling of *jeong* that the Korean bbq in restaurants originally functions to achieve.

The future of Korean bbq in North Carolina will be an interesting story, as there are now many different variations and traditions that exist both in the public restaurants and the private household. How these two (or more) forms will interact with each other will provide many different avenues for Korean bbq to continue to captivate those who love it. Further research can be done to track and understand how and why these change occur and how these changes in small areas such as the Research Triangle are effect and contribute to mainstream American forces.

While these have been my own findings for the specific Korean community in the Triangle area, it is important to note that this cannot reflect all Korean communities in the American south and even in North Carolina. However, it can be used as a comparison and

contrast to what is happening in other communities, and I would not be surprised if this process existed in other places with Korean bbq and other Korean foods in America. My experiences and relationships with my collaborators has shown me that often times, people have much more in common than others would have you believe. By critically thinking about how ideas, places, and feelings are replicated more similarities can be found and bridges built, such as the ones through barbeque in North Carolina.

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