

## ABSTRACT

### “I’M KOREAN, LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES”

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This study explores the acculturation process of generation 1.5 Korean immigrants in the United States with special attention to their construction of ethnic identity as it influences their adjustment to the new culture. The researcher defines generation 1.5 Korean as those who were born in Korea and immigrated to the United States between age 5 and 16. For the purpose of this study, the researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews on the participants’ immigration experiences, focusing on how they have developed their ethnic identities over time. Twenty Korean immigrants were recruited and interviewed in the area of San José, California.

Findings suggest that social context mediates the relationship between acculturation and ethnic identity. This study also identifies major variables such as the maintenance of their heritage language or the degree of exposure to Korean culture and people playing a crucial role in the ethnic identity development of generation 1.5 Korean immigrants. Implications for policy, practice, and further research are discussed.