

Emma Davis

HI244 Brothers at War: The Two Koreas

Professor Diederich

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Interview Transcript: Jordan Lee

Initial Interview

Emma: My name is Emma Davis. Today is September 29th of 2025, and I am interviewing Jordan Lee through Zoom for the Colby College Korean Oral History Project. Jordan, do you agree to grant the College permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?

Jordan: Yes.

E: Awesome. Okay, so we can start with some basic questions, so do you want to introduce yourself to the audience?

J: Sure. I am Jordan Lee, and I am a junior at Colby.

E: Awesome. What is your current family dynamic like? Explain that a little bit more.

J: I'm from California, and my entire family lives there. I have a little sister and it's just me and her, and then all of my cousins, who are actually half Korean. And then my grandparents also live in California right by us.

E: Nice, and your parents were born in Korea, yes?

J: Yeah, both of them were born in Seoul, South Korea but my mom immigrated here to California when she was about 6, and my dad immigrated when he was 3.

E: Awesome. And did they immigrate with their parents and with their families? Or by themselves?

J: So, my mom, she has two sisters, and all three of them were born in Korea, and their whole family immigrated to California together, but my dad's family was a little different. He has two younger sisters, but both of them were born in California and his parents immigrated when he was two, and then he came over with his grandparents when he was three, like a year later.

E: Very cool. So, you've always lived in the US then?

J: Yep.

E: Awesome. Then just some more of your Korean family background. What are your earliest memories of Korean words or foods or customs that your parents would have shared with you?

J: I think... The earliest definitely I would say words, because my grandparents - my grandma mostly - mostly just spoke Korean. She can understand English but she can't speak it very well, so when we were growing up little, we would learn *Gamsahamnida*, that means thank you in Korean, and then to say hello you say *Annyeonghaseyo*. So, you would learn the little basic things of how to say hi and thank you and then when I was growing up, when my sister was born, she would call me *Unni*, which is the child term for older sister, basically. But those are probably the only terms we would learn and then foods we would know. But I'd say word wise and language, that was what I mostly know. Then growing up for family celebrations or anything we would always have some form of Korean food there.

E: Nice, tell me more.

J: So that was a big thing in my family. On Thanksgiving, we would have your traditional American food and then we would do a Korean lunch. So, they would kind of combine different Korean things into almost like American culture. And then I'd say my biggest one is birthdays because growing up - I'm the oldest so I don't remember my first birthday, but I remember my sisters and all my cousins - that's a really big Korea holiday because, I guess, long ago, infant

mortality rates were not great, so a big thing it's a big thing if a kid makes it to one [year old]. They would have to wear a traditional Korean outfit, kind of. It's called Hanbok, and it's made of silk and it's really, really colorful and you wear this silk hat and everyone wears it - all kids wear it on their first birthdays. As you grow up you wear it at big events, my mom wore it to her wedding at one point, or my grandparents wore it when I was born so it is kind of just a big traditional outfit I guess, but basically in the first birthday, you have this big celebration, its only Korean food there and then at one point in the party, the child is at this table with a bunch of objects, and they kind of signify your possible career, like what you'll be in the future. So, at mine, I think there was a laptop, a baseball or something, and in my mom's words, "Something shiny" – I don't know if it was jewelry or something – and then there was money. Then the kid is supposed to go towards one object and that's supposed to be, like, "Oh, that's what they'll be in the future".

E: What did you pick?

J: I don't know, my mom said I picked something shiny

E: That's awesome.

J: I don't know what that means but I feel that makes sense because I really like sparkly things now.

E: Do you remember what your sister picked?

J: Oh my God, I don't know what she picked. I think she picked a computer or something.

E: Okay.

J: Yeah, I feel like that checks out. She's pretty techy.

E: Yeah?

J: Yeah, but I think that's our biggest one (Korean tradition)

E: Yeah, what would you say your favorite Korean dish would be at those events?

J: I would say mine was pro - oh my gosh, I don't know. I've been a big Kimchi spicy girl.

E: Okay?

J: Since I was little, which is really surprising, because why would a kid like super spicy? But I think Kimchi's been my favorite or like Kimchi fried rice. Those are probably my favorites.

E: Interesting, that's awesome. So then do you feel like your Korean heritage is something that is talked a lot about in your family? Like it was something you knew growing up surrounded by it?

J: Yeah, I think it wasn't as much as a spoken thing, it was kind of just pretty normal like there was never a time I think I was, like, "Oh, why are we doing this?" ever. I was kind of like, "Oh I'm Korean. This is just what we do," sort of thing. Yeah

E: Was your family ever close to other Korean Americans growing up or was that a kind of community you were a part of?

J: I would say definitely more when I was growing up, I think when they were growing up, there was definitely less Koreans around. But for me, I went to a very small elementary school and preschool and there just happened to be another Korean girl there, so then our families got pretty close, but I think we were just closer to more of the Asian community. Where we live, because I'm from the Bay Area, there's just such a high population of Asian Americans but I think that was probably the main ties. I guess.

E: Yeah. And do you feel you've maintained those Korean community relationships? I guess you were saying you live in a pretty Asian central area but?

J: Yeah, I definitely think so. That family had a dry cleaners business, kind of by us, so my mom's from Marin, so that's like 40 minutes north and her family owned a dry cleaner so they

kind of all knew the Korean families that would eventually move to Marin area, so I would say we were pretty close.

E: Nice. And then you talked a little bit about how your American cultural practices would mix with Korean traditions, but can you elaborate on that at all? Any areas where you felt your Korean heritage was just put into an American tradition at all?

J: Yeah, I think I would say just the Thanksgiving one is probably the biggest one because that's such a big American holiday and I think, I don't even know, I don't even think my family was like, "Oh, we have to do Korean culture stuff in it." I think it was more just that we don't know what else to do, we have all this time in the day, why don't we just make Korean food and then well have more American food for dinners sort of thing. And I think that's because my Grandma was really big on cooking, but she always cooked Korean food growing up for my mom, so that was kind of her side... like the touch to add to Thanksgiving, sort of.

E: I love that. Now I want to move into a little bit more of your knowledge of Korean history? How did you learn about Korean history growing up?

J: I was fortunate enough in elementary school where we did a lot of parent projects so then I just had to learn about what life was like in Korea and that was kind of how I learned about the history about North vs South Korea and things like that and then we did immigration projects a lot of the time, and I had to do a lot of research on the different cultural practices in Korea and social lives and stuff like that. I think that's how I learned the historical side of it, and then my parents just happened to give me their memories that they sort of had growing up, even though they were 6 and 2. I'd say that was mostly the way.

E: So you feel it was more facilitated by your family versus in school instruction?

J: Yeah I mean I had a few history classes that would touch on North Korea versus South Korea, but I think it was more just my family would just tell me about it when I had some sort of project I had to learn about them.

E: And would that then come more in family stories?

J: Yeah, I mean I think my aunts and my dad had more stories than my mom did, per se, but they would kind of just be like, "Oh, you had an uncle and he was in the Korean War," and I'd be like, "Well, what's the Korean War?" And then they would tell me about it like, "It's called this," and then and then that was kind of how I learned a lot of the history.

E: Do you remember any of your uncle in the Korean war? That's really interesting.

J: I really wish I did. All I know is that he was... I think he was trying to flee or something. I think somewhere he was in South Korea might have been bombed or attacked and he was trying to escape. And then they never heard from him again, sadly, and I think something happened to him that they never heard from him. But that was all I heard about that story.

E: That's crazy though. That's a really cool connection.

J: So, it was like whoa, unfortunate but really cool.

E: Have your parents, or your family, even you, been back to Korea at all?

J: I haven't been yet. I'm hoping I go soon, but my dad has gone back to Korea a few times for business and then my aunt, actually my dad's sister, who's actually born in the US, she actually went to live in Korea for about two years and then she came back to live in the states for a few years and then she came back to live in the states so she kind of bounces back and forth. But I think she's the most recent that's been there.

E: Is that more for work with her, or just to be closer to the culture?

J: I think just to be closer to the culture, because sadly not a lot of my family members speak fluent Korean anymore because growing up my parents would be told, okay you're in American culture you have to learn how to speak English, because they were so young – they just started school. So, she wanted to learn how to speak Korean and just learn more about where she's from because I guess growing up their lives was more like you need to assimilate to American culture and Korean culture can come later.

E: Yeah, do you feel like that then kind of projected into your life, too? Or do you wish that you had more Korean knowledge and stuff?

J: I think it definitely projected into my growing up a little, I think aside from like okay we eat Korean food and we wear the *Hanboks* (Korean traditional attire) sometimes for certain events, I think it definitely did because I definitely grew up very American, and I think it was later on that I was like, “Oh, I kind of wish I spoke some Korean, because then I could speak to my grandparents,” type of thing, and I think my mom also wishes that she taught us, but then again, she also grew up where it was like she needed to learn English to be in an American school and fit in.

E: That's interesting. Do you ever feel that was ever isolating at all? Or did you feel you were still in a Korean community that you felt you were connected to both?

J: I don't think it was ever super isolating, I think because of how I grew up, where there were so many kids whose parents were Korean-Americans, or Chinese-Americans that they all kind of grew up in a similar fashion where all of us were like okay we kinda know how to speak where our parents are from, but not really so I don't think it was too isolating but I think now looking back I kind of was like oh I wish I was able to bond with my grandparents more and know what they were saying type of thing.

E: Yeah, do you think that your grandparents would feel the same way, that they wish that they could have maybe shared more Korean history or heritage with you, or was that not really much of a barrier?

J: I think for my grandma probably – because my grandpa speaks pretty fluently, so we were able to communicate with him pretty well – but I think definitely for my grandma, who can't really speak English very well and understand it as well as he can. I think for her, she definitely wishes that she taught us or my mom taught us but ... it's alright

E: Okay, and then my last question for you is what aspect of Korean culture do you wish everyone could know? Or what do you think that people really should know?

J: Oh, that's a good one. I think ... I think now, knowing what I guess the social life is like in Korea, that's what I wish everyone knew because I feel like they're so advanced. My aunt will come home and tell me about like “Oh yeah, they just made this skincare thing because they realized it's better than doing this other type of thing.” So, kind of just how advanced they are and the way their social lives are. I think they're very friendly to everybody and everybody's fashion is very different so I'd say the pop culture side, I think, is really cool.

E: Yeah, that's awesome. Do you feel ... sorry I said the last question but I have one more. Do you feel like because of the tension around North Korea, that it kind of deters people from learning the positive sides of South Korea and just Korea in general?

J: Yeah, I think so because I think people ... I didn't realize this when I was little but I think a lot of people don't know that North Korean and South Korea are very, very different and I think that when they hear “Oh, your Korean...” Like, I've gotten a bunch of times, “Are you North Korean?” And it's like, “No, that's completely different. Not super possible.” So, I definitely think knowing about the dictatorship and how it is... how sad it is over there, some people are

like ... they don't have the perception that ... No, there's also South Korea where it's very different and nice and very similar to the [United] States, so I think it definitely deters peoples' perception a little bit.

E: Yeah, yeah I think it's interesting to learn about both... both sides of everything.

J: Yeah, exactly.

E: Yeah all right. If you have anything else to add ... if not that's all the questions I had.

J: I think I'm good.

E: Awesome! Well thank you so much.

J: Of course. Yay!

Follow Up Interview Transcript:

E: Okay, hi. My name is Emma Davis. Today is October 9th of 2025, and I'm interviewing Jordan Lee through Zoom for the Colby College Korean Oral History Project. Again, Jordan, do you agree to grant the College permission to archive and publish this interview for educational purposes?

J: Yes.

E: Awesome. So, thank you so much for doing this follow-up interview. I think it'll give a great chance to dive into your answers a bit more and just get some more feedback on your Korean culture.

J: Yeah, sounds perfect!

E: Awesome. To start, I wanted to also dive into, like I said, the culture a little bit more. So, you mentioned Thanksgiving being a holiday that combines both of your Korean and American

culture, but do you feel, with your Korean culture mixing with American culture, does it feel like one side is more heavily present?

J: Yeah, I definitely think that especially growing up, we definitely stayed true to more American culture. There were little tidbits of Korean culture, like I said, with the food, and little integrations we had, but I definitely think that growing up, we leaned towards more American culture, and I think that's also just because of how my parents kind of grew up, because they also, grew up in California, stayed in California their whole entire lives, I never really went back to Korea, so I think that might be part of the reason why, but... Yeah.

E: Yeah, and you were talking a bit in the last one about your family, and its connection to Korea, so would you want to elaborate on that a little bit more? Or just elaborate on how your parents kind of have shared that part with you.

J: Yeah, so my parents definitely... like, we see with my grandparents a lot, just more of their, Korean culture side, and how they grew up. My mom was telling me about how they, as a family, would do this, kind of traditional... not a holiday, but like... honor your ancestors type of family event, sort of, because in Korean culture, it's really big that, you on your... You respect your elders, and you honor your ancestors, so, when we would see – like, for me, when I would see my great-grandparents – you have to bow to your great-grandparents, sort of, like, they're almost a godly figure when they become an elder. So, when my mom's dad's dad passed away, they grew up celebrating this thing called *Jesa* (ceremony memorializing ancestors). And it's basically where there's a ceremonial table with food and drinks and bowls and stuff, and they would... it's an offering to your ancestors, so, they would be able to connect with them from, I want to say, beyond the grave, but, like, beyond the grave, basically. So, for her, that was a tradition that they grew up with a lot, not so much as me, I think that's because, I mean, my both... thankfully both

my grandparents are still alive, so, we haven't had any big deaths in the family, but for her, that's what she said was a big thing they did.

E: Yeah, that's really interesting. Do you think... Also, I don't really have a ton of Korean knowledge, but does it play any factor into religious practices at all?

J: I think it does a bit. My mom's side of the family wasn't super religious, but my dad's side was super, super Christian. His mom was a singer in the Korean Christian church that they grew up going to all the time, so I think especially with the respecting elders piece of Korean culture, that was heavily influenced religiously. It's, like, that sort of sense, you always had to be extremely respectful to your elders. In almost every sense, I think he (dad) was saying how you had to always offer them food first for every situation, and little things like that, so I think that was probably the main thing that influenced - religious-wise.

E: Yeah. And when you look at the Korean culture that has been circulating your life, do you think it is something that you'll want to pass on to your own children, and immediate family that you would create yourself? Is it enough? Is it intertwined enough in your life right now that that's something you would want to pursue?

J: Yeah, I definitely think it would be something I would pursue, just because I feel like I'm so heavily influenced by American culture. I honestly wish I had more Korean culture that I grew up with, but I think when I have kids, I would want them to maybe speak Korean, or, we would do more Korean traditions, per se. I know for me, when I get married, I'm gonna wanna wear the traditional Korean *Hanbok* (traditional Korean dress) at some point in my wedding like my mom did, so I think I would definitely want to integrate it a little bit more if I could.

E: Yeah. Do you have ideas of how you would share the language with them? If it's not something you know really well yourself, or would it just be more sharing on the aspects that you already know.

J: I think it would be sharing the aspects I know, and then also just putting my kids in some sort of Korean language class. I grew up around a lot of Chinese-American kids, and at our elementary school, there was specifically a Chinese after-school class where they would go to learn Mandarin. So, if I could do that for my kids, I would definitely want to do that, and maybe sometime after college I would want to learn how to speak Korean. Just be able to have conversations, maybe not fluently, but...

E: Yeah. Interesting. And while we're talking about your family, can you just tell me more about your interactions with Korea itself as a family, and... Like, you mentioned that your aunt lives... currently lives, or lived?

J: She currently lives in Hawaii, but she was in Korea for a year when I was little, and then moved back to the States for I think... 6 years, and then she moved back to Korea for another 2 years. So, she kind of hopped back and forth.

E: Okay. And do you know ... could you elaborate more on what she did and things she told you of being over there? Or just what she was doing?

J: Yeah, she told me she wanted to connect more with our extended family out there on her mom's side, because their family... her – my dad's side of the family – is a lot smaller than my mom's side, but we have a lot of distant great-aunts and uncles still in Korea. I think she wanted to connect with them more, because I guess she hadn't met them yet – maybe over calls and stuff. So I think that was her main reason, and then also she ended up attending the same university that her mom went to, just to learn more Korean. So, I think she def – that was also a part of her

wanting to connect back with her mom, because... my nana – my dad's mom – passed away when we were little, so I know that was a big reason why she went back.

E: Interesting, yeah. Do your parents really have memories of living in Korea? I know they immigrated when they were very young, but is that anything they were able to share with you, or have you been back to Korea? I don't remember what you said in the beginning.

J: Yeah, my mom doesn't really remember being in Korea, she just remembers how, like I said, my mom's family had a lot of family members out there. My grandma was I think one of eight siblings, maybe? And she's also an identical twin – which I totally didn't know about – but she says that she didn't remember much other than her mom had a lot of help with her and her sisters growing up, because her sisters I think are 2 and 4 years younger than her. So, they were all really little in Korea, so she had help with that. My dad, on the other hand... He just remembers growing up with my great-grandma and great-grandpa, in Korea, after his family left. But I think that was the only thing they really remember, because they were super little.

E: Yeah. Do you think that it would have been emotional at all to have your dad have his family leave, or was it then exciting to be able to come to the U.S.? I guess, you can't... you don't really know, but... If you could speak about it at all.

J: I'm gonna assume it was probably very emotional, just because, at the time, he was an only child and I know his family is very close. I would assume he was probably pretty confused and upset when they just left, and when you're 3, you can't understand, like, my parents are immigrating to the [United] States to find better worker opportunities, right?

E: Mm-hmm.

J: But I know, yeah, so that's my... that's my assumption of that.

E: Yeah. And your parents are both now U.S. citizens, and they don't have Korean citizenship at all?

J: Yeah. They both got their U.S. citizenship when they were, I want to say early 20s, and got their green cards when they were in their teenage years, but I think my grandma still has dual citizenship. I don't think she's been back since she immigrated.

E: Yeah. Okay. Do you think that that process was hard at all for your parents? Does it have any symbolic ties to having lost that citizenship, or do they still feel as connected to Korea?

J: I think they – I think for my dad – It definitely is probably a little bit harder, because I know he feels more of a tie to Korea. I think he misses... he feels like he missed out on (Korea) – because being the oldest kid, and having both his sisters born in the [United] States, I think he definitely feels more of a disconnect there. I think for my mom she's... I don't want to say less interested, but was more, like, about the American lifestyle. I don't think she feels that much of a disconnect.

E: Okay. We're learning right now in my class about compulsory military service. Was that anything that ever impacted your dad? Or since they immigrated when he was so young, was it not really a possibility?

J: I know he told me that his dad was in the military from that and that if he had stayed [in Korea], he would have had to serve in the Korean military for a bit. There's actually photos of him when he was little in Korean military outfits made for little kids – not, like, costumes, but, like, sort of symbolic reference – like, this will be your future, type of thing. He told me that he's happy that he did not have to do that, but if he had stayed, he would have had to.

E: And do they [parents] ever share Korean history factually, rather than culturally, or is it a lot more of the cultural pieces of it?

J: It's definitely a lot more of the cultural pieces. I think the more historical parts are traditions that we do, like, where they stem from. So, the first birthday thing, they would tell me – because I would be confused. I'm like, “Why are we making such a big deal on our first birthday?” Like, “Who cares?” Right? But they would kind of tell me, like, “Oh, in the way, way past, infant mortality rates were so [high], historically. It was a really big deal if you survived to your first birthday.” I think that was the main historical part I would learn. And then I would do more research in school and stuff when I had projects about history stuff.

E: Yeah, so in a school setting, was learning about Korean history something you would have had to take the initiative to pursue in a project, or was it more built into any sort of curriculum?

J: It was definitely built into my world history classes. I definitely remember in middle school and high school that there would always be some sort of unit on North Korea versus South Korea. We did a lot of research with that. But, it was mostly on – I guess – Wars in North Korea and ties to America, sort of, and how people would escape North Korea, and that history. Not as much of the cultural history of why things are the way they are.

E: Yeah. So you could then kind of get both from your family and school. Nice. Yeah. And do you think, now that you're in school on the East Coast, were you more connected to your Korean heritage and history from being closer to the Pacific, and ... Geographically, was there a bigger population in California, or is that not really something you could notice?

J: Yeah, I think definitely being on the East Coast was a big culture shock. I was like, “Oh ,you don't know about this Korean thing.” I feel like, I guess growing up in the Bay Area, because there was such a big influx of immigrants, that I was kind of accustomed to growing up with other Korean kids around who kind of had a very similar life growing up. So, coming to the East Coast, it was kind of strange – I guess – that people didn't know about internment camps and

things like that. I guess in California that was the main stop for a lot of East Asians when they immigrated. So, I think it was definitely a very big shock, but I think it's pretty cool, because now I'm like, "I have a cool story".

E: Yeah, it's definitely weird having grown up and been taught on the East Coast. I did not learn about Korea, really, at all, so it's interesting to know that that's kind of a geographical push.

J: Yeah.

E: Do you think it would be beneficial to have that more in schools everywhere?

J: Yeah honestly, I think so, just because I feel like Korean history is not really talked about as much as I thought it was growing up. I was like, "Oh, yeah, know about the history of Korea – like the Korean War. Hearing from more of my... more of our teammates that it was mostly about American history versus European history, I think it would definitely be beneficial to know a different perspective, or, history in the sense of what's going on in the rest of the world.

E: Yeah. Yeah, and you mentioned our teammates. I want to clarify for any of our listeners that Jordan and I are both on the [Colby] volleyball team. But, do you want to talk at all about the breakdown of our team, if anything? Does that bring in any aspect that there are a decent amount of people from the Bay Area?

J: Yeah, so our team has about... I want to say there's 6 of us from the Bay Area. A lot of us grew up pretty close together with rival high schools, and I guess just catching up with them on what our lives were like in high school and stuff – It was very different from a lot of our teammates who are from the East Coast or Midwest. What we learned in school, and the different demographics of people around us were really, really different, like, two of our teammates are Filipino, and I grew up knowing a lot of Filipino foods, and people, and words, and they did too.

But I know for a lot of our teammates here they would never know what those cultural traditions and foods are, which I find really interesting.

E: Yeah, it's nice to have a bit of a connection.

J: Yeah, exactly.

E: Yeah, and kind of on the topic of food, do you know how to cook any Korean food? Is that something that can tie you to your Korean background at all? Was that a big thing in your family?

J: Yeah, I can cook very basic Korean food. Korean food definitely is super, super complicated, and it's all about the little tiny vegetables that you cut up. The one thing I will say I can make pretty well is Cucumber kimchi, which is called *Oigimchi* (cucumber kimchi) in Korean, but I think that's because that's the easiest to make. I leave most of the Korean cooking to my mom and my grandma.

E: Yeah. Would you all cook as a family? You talked about Thanksgiving, obviously, having Korean lunch, and then American style dinner. Is that a family thing that would be part of an experience, or is it just cooking?

J: Yeah. So, for our Korean lunch, we had this tradition where all the kids would make the fried *mandu* (potstickers/dumplings), which are fried Korean pot stickers, and my grandma would make the filling and then bring over the rice paper and stuff. We would learn how to make all of them, and they would just get cooked. The dads would come back from golf or something, and then we would all just eat it together. So, that was the main cooking all together that we would do. Definitely it was a lot of the moms doing the cooking, and us just kind of messing around.

E: Yeah. That's awesome, though. Can you explain the Thanksgiving a little bit more again, too? Would you stay with the same group of family for the American-style dinner, or was it shifting around at all? How big was this gathering?

J: Yeah. So, our whole family would usually stay for lunch and dinner, and then my cousins would go the next day and do their own Thanksgiving with the other side of their family, which is Filipino. So, they would kind of have more Filipino-style Thanksgiving. For us, it was usually my dad's sisters, my mom's sisters, my grandparents, and my cousins – generally – because all of us live pretty close. And then that's when we would kind of just combine both American and Korean cultures together.

E: So it's both sides of your family? That's really nice. It's not mom's side for this, dad's side for this.

J: Yeah. Everyone is pretty close. Fortunately both of them being Korean – maybe that's what made everybody so close together – but yeah both sides of our families are very, very close.

E: That's awesome. That's really fun to have that whole big family.

J: Yeah, exactly.

E: That's fun.

J: Yeah.

E: And then you also mentioned that you wish that people knew more about Korean pop culture and how advanced some of that is. How do you think this information would best be spread? Do you want to talk a little bit more about that, too?

J: I think, maybe over social media. I know for me, I see a lot on TikTok and stuff like, “Oh, matcha's trending right now, everybody's super into matcha” and things like that. I think Korean skincare is starting to get really, really popular over social media and different influencers. So I

think that is probably the main way, I would say. It would be cool to see Korean pop culture get spread throughout the US. I know for my friends in high school and stuff, they would be like, “Oh my God, have you tried these Korean skincare things”, like, “I saw this influencer using it.” So, maybe that would be a pretty cool way.

E: Yeah. So, you would think that it would be more impactful to learn about the culture with hands-on things like that, versus increasing it in an education setting, or should it be both?

J: Honestly, both. I think the pop culture setting – definitely social media-wise – because everybody's pretty much glued to their phones. But I think historical and cultural-wise, that would be pretty cool to learn for everybody in school to get another perspective of what's happening around us.

E: I am definitely a history nerd, but what was your favorite part of Korean history to learn? Was it with the North Korea-South Korea-type stuff, or was it more global at all?

J: I definitely would say the North Korea-South Korea stuff, just because I personally don't have any ties to North Korea. So, learning about how people would escape to China but then they would get caught and then sent back and would escape again. And the different tactics and learning about how South Korea has a policy that anyone from North Korea, if they escape and go to South Korea immediately become a South Korean resident. So, learning about those things, I have found it really cool.

E: Can you talk at all about having a South Korean identity? Is that a thing for you and for just the Korean population?

J: Yeah, I know there's a very, very small North Korean population. I think growing up I would hear, like, “Are you North Korean or South Korean?” Which – I feel like that also goes into ties of, like educational-wise – I think having a South Korean identity, it's been more like, “Oh, I

have a 'freedom'" sort of thing. My parents grew up with the freedom of, like, "Oh, we're growing up in Korea," but it's not like, "Oh, our government is controlling us" type.

E: Yeah, that's really interesting.

J: Yeah.

E: Cool. Well, that's kind of all the questions that I had, but can you think of any other things that you could elaborate on? Anything else you'd want to have added in or shared about in the interview?

J: I guess I could touch on what it was like for my parents growing up a little bit.

E: Absolutely, yeah.

J: Yeah, I think from my mom – like what she's told me – she just said how growing up in California at a young age, for her and her family, it was pretty challenging. My grandpa's job transferred them to the [United] States, so it was kind of not as much of a planned out type of deal. Where they lived in Marin, there wasn't a really big Korean population, or Asian population as it was. So, they kind of felt like, "Oh, we're the odd ones out in school" and stuff. Only my grandpa knew how to speak English, so it was kind of like, Grandpa speaking English to the kids, but grandma speaking Korean to the kids. So, they grew up with that challenge. Then their parents wanted them to really assimilate to American culture, but then [also] really tried to have them keep speaking Korean. I guess it didn't work very well. So, she just mentioned to me those challenges and growing up as a pretty big minority.

E: Yeah. Do you think any of those challenges then also carried on into your life, or had they established themselves by the time they [your parents] had kids?

J: I think, fortunately, they had established themselves. I think for me growing up – I grew up with such a big population of East Asians – it was easier for me to feel like I fit in. One of my

best friends growing up, since preschool, – she's Korean – and then we had another friend who's Japanese. So, I kind of grew up with more people that were Asian but I think it's also because they were able to establish themselves pretty well.

E: Yeah, that's awesome. It's a really cool story that you have.

J: Yeah.

E: All right, well, can you think of any other last things you want to share? If not, totally fine.

J: I think that's it! Yeah.

E: Awesome. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. I hope that other people can learn from your history, too.