



Spatial concentrations of Korean Chinese and determinants of their residential location choices in Seoul



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A B S T R A C T

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This paper investigates residential location patterns of the Korean Chinese community and their reasons for choosing their current residential location, using quantitative and qualitative methods. There are several findings, from this empirical research, worth noting. First, and most importantly, Korean Chinese residents have a high tendency to settle in already established Korean Chinese communities, and to reside away from Chinese and other ethnic communities. This provides empirical evidence of a spatial concentration and segregation of the Korean Chinese community. The survey results also support this finding, showing that Korean Chinese residents are likely to live close to their friends and relatives who already live in Seoul. Second, both the regression analysis and questionnaires demonstrated that the residential locations of Korean Chinese communities are mostly affected by housing factors such as cheap rent and the availability of multi-family and rental housing, as well as by accessibility of jobs and urban services.

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Introduction

In South Korea (herein after Korea), there are numerous immigrants and foreign workers. The number of non-Korean residents has surged since the 1980s as a result of rapid economic development and social democratization. Korea had 1.2 million foreigners, representing 2.4 percent of the total population (50.7 million), residing in the country at the end of 2011. In the same year, the number of illegal aliens (illegal immigrants) living in Korea reached about 200,000, which equaled 17% of the total foreign population.

Recently, the Korean Statistical Office (2011) released data on foreigners living in Korea, and more specifically the Seoul Metropolitan Region (SMR). More than half of the foreign residents in Korea are Chinese (55%), and the percentage of the Chinese population in the SMR is even higher (63.3%). About 82% of the Chinese in the SMR are ethnic Korean (*joseonjok* in Korean), thus the Korean Chinese community is the largest group of foreign residents in Korea and the SMR. The second largest group is other ethnic Chinese (15.2% in the nation and 11.3% in the SMR), while Vietnamese rank third with 10.7% in the nation and 6.8% in the SMR.

Partly because the Korean Chinese are the largest group of foreign residents residing in the SMR, and partly because they have unique

characteristics, such as their proficiency in Korean and heavy social discrimination against them in spite of their ethnic homogeneity, this study aims to investigate residential location patterns of the Korean Chinese and their reasons for choosing their current residential location, using quantitative and qualitative methods.

For the quantitative analyzes, we use hotspot analysis, which is a spatial statistical method, for identifying the existence of enclaves of Korean Chinese in Seoul, and a standard multiple regression analysis for examining determinants of the residential location of Korean Chinese. Since the data used for the quantitative analyzes is spatially aggregated, and thus limited in its ability to investigate specific reasons behind choosing their current locations, we also conducted a survey of Korean Chinese living in Seoul and asked questions about the reasons they chose their current residential location, the problems and difficulties they face, and their community satisfaction.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the theoretical arguments and existing literature regarding residential location choices of foreign-born populations and issues of spatial segregation. The second section introduces some characteristics of the Korean Chinese in Korea and their spatial distribution. The third section presents the results of the hotspot and multiple regression analyzes. The fourth section explains the survey results and presents a comprehensive discussion based on both the quantitative and qualitative analysis results, which is followed by conclusions and policy implications.

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Theoretical framework and literature review

How do Korean Chinese select their housing and residential locations? What factors influence location-specific housing demand? In order to gain an understanding of their housing location decisions, some appreciation of the theoretical context of household movement is necessary. Even though there are unique factors influencing the residential location choices of immigrants and foreign residents, distinguishable from those of native residents, two major economic theories regarding housing location choice can explain residential location choices in urban areas: utility maximization theory and 'Tiebout' theory (Montgomery & Curtis, 2006).

An economic theory suggests that a household chooses the dwelling with the best combination of features that maximize the household's utility subject to its budget constraints, weighing housing costs against transportation costs (Alonso, 1964). On the other hand, some argue that households choose a housing location based on the quality and cost of public services such as health care services, education, and local taxes by "vote[ing] with their feet" (Friedman, 1981; Reshovsky, 1979; Tiebout, 1956).

Though the main theme of this study is related to the large volume of research on the determinants of residential location choice, specific areas are highlighted where existing research most closely intersects the objectives of this study, rather than conducting a comprehensive review on residential location choice. The scope is narrowed by looking specifically at the role of racial and ethnic factors of foreign-born populations in residential location choices.

Racial or ethnic factors are regarded as one of the key determinants of residential location choice (Bartel, 1989; Buckley, 1996; Dunlevy, 1991; Guo & Bhat, 2007; Zavadny, 1999). Other factors include school quality (Bayoh, Irwin, & Haab, 2006; Kim, Pagliara, & Preston, 2005; Morrow-Jones, Irwin, & Roe, 2004; Vogt & Marans, 2004); density and land use patterns (Morrow-Jones et al., 2004; Myers & Gearin, 2001); and proximity to recreational and natural sites (Colwell, Dehring, & Turnbull, 2002; Kaplan & Austin, 2004; Vogt & Marans, 2004).

A large number of studies regarding determinants of location choices of foreign-born individuals exist, though a majority of them focus on immigrants and refugees who were granted legal permanent residence in the United States (US) and Europe. The existing literature includes the presence of earlier immigrants, socioeconomic factors such as the labor market, housing, and public services, and welfare benefits as key variables affecting immigrants' residential location choices.

According to Zavadny (1999), the presence of earlier immigrants is the most important determinant of immigrants' location choices within the US. Many existing studies support a positive relationship between the number of new immigrants and the number of existing immigrants born in the same country of origin or other foreign countries (Bartel, 1989; Buckley, 1996; Dunlevy, 1991). Some insist that the presence of other foreign-born populations also positively influences inter-regional migration patterns of foreign-born residents within the country. Domestic migration of a foreign-born population has contributed to strengthening the spatial concentration of immigrants (Belanger and Rogers 1992). Some studies in housing research have shown that social stratification and ethnic homogeneity are important to residential location choices (Sirgy, Grzeskowiak, & Su, 2005). For example, Toussaint-Comeau and Rhine (2004) highlight the tendency of Hispanic immigrants in the US to locate themselves within "ethnic enclaves."

The research examining the role of economic factors in the location choices of immigrants show mixed results. Some found no significant relationship between local labor market conditions and the residential location of immigrants (Filer, 1992; Kritz and Nogle,

1994), while others reported a strong positive correlation between the average wage of a metropolitan area and the number of foreign-born residents (Bartel, 1989). A few studies examined the role of welfare payments in the immigrants' residential location decisions, and contended that immigrants, especially refugees, are highly likely to live in regions with high welfare benefits in the US (Buckley, 1996; Zimmerman and Fix, 1994).

Furthermore, studies on immigrants' residential location choices have presented mixed findings in terms of social assimilation and integration (Mesch, 2002). Some argued that immigrants are likely to settle in the same ethnic community at an early stage of immigration because it provides housing and employment opportunities and social support (Hagan, 1998). As language skills and socioeconomic statuses improve, they are likely to spread into neighborhoods with native populations. This argument regards immigrants' spatial concentration as a necessary step in the process of their social assimilation. However, others argued that the spatial concentration of the ethnic neighborhood delays social integration processes because it strengthens informal and limited social networks, and retards the process of culture and language acquisition (Espenshade and Fu, 1997).

In sum, the literature can be summarized by the following key findings: 1) racial or ethnic factors are one of the important variables in determining residential location choice in general; 2) there is a higher tendency for new immigrants to choose locations closer to existing immigrants from their country of origin; and 3) there are mixed arguments regarding the role of an ethnic enclave in terms of immigrants' social assimilation and integration, whether these enclaves are a necessary step in the process of social assimilation or an impediment to smooth social integration.

Distinctions of this study from existing literature

This study has two main features that distinguish it from the existing literature in terms of the residential location choice of foreign-born populations. First, this study takes a three-step and comprehensive approach. We first identified the ethnic enclave of Korean Chinese and analyzed spatial changes in the ethnic enclaves over time, using hotspot analyzes. We then used a statistical approach to investigate the determinants of Korean Chinese' residential location choices. We further supplemented the results of the statistical analysis by conducting a survey of Korean Chinese who live in a community identified as their ethnic enclave in Seoul.

Second, to the best of the authors' knowledge, this study represents the first attempt to investigate the residential location pattern and the determinants of returning foreign-born populations to their ancestral country. Unlike past studies on residential location choices of immigrants who have different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds from the native people, this study deals with Korean Chinese who share common linguistic and cultural roots with other Koreans, and returned to Korea after experiencing economic hardship and discrimination in China. This research is expected to have significant domestic policy implications for central and local governments, in terms of actions to improve the quality of life of the Korean Chinese communities, and comparative policy implications for other countries that have similar experiences in terms of accepting returning foreign-born but ethnically similar people.

Korean Chinese in Korea and their spatial distribution

Characteristics of Korean Chinese in Korea

Though the history of Korean Chinese emigration dates back to the late 19th century when Koreans in the Northern part of Korea,

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