Generational Differences in the Socioeconomic Attainments of Korean Americans

ChangHwan Kim
University of Kansas

The 4th Annual Conference of the Research Center for Korean Community

April 2013
Introduction

- Korean American population grew 20 times between 1965 and 2010 (from 70,000 to 1.6 millions).
Introduction

- Korean American population grew 20 times between 1965 and 2010 (from 70,000 to 1.6 millions).
- The 2nd generation now accounts for around 1/3 of the Korean American population.
Korean American population grew 20 times between 1965 and 2010 (from 70,000 to 1.6 millions).

The 2nd generation now accounts for around 1/3 of the Korean American population.

Socioeconomic status of the 2nd generation and its comparison with the 1st generation and other racial/ethnic groups are important, because
Introduction

- Korean American population grew 20 times between 1965 and 2010 (from 70,000 to 1.6 millions).
- The 2nd generation now accounts for around 1/3 of the Korean American population.
- Socioeconomic status of the 2nd generation and its comparison with the 1st generation and other racial/ethnic groups are important, because
  1. Immigration scholar: Assimilation. Is it different by racial/ethnic groups?
Introduction

- Korean American population grew 20 times between 1965 and 2010 (from 70,000 to 1.6 millions).
- The 2nd generation now accounts for around 1/3 of the Korean American population.
- Socioeconomic status of the 2nd generation and its comparison with the 1st generation and other racial/ethnic groups are important, because
  1. Immigration scholar: Assimilation. Is it different by racial/ethnic groups?
  2. Race & stratification scholar: Is a new color-line (new racial hierarchy) emerging in the US.
“Foreign-born immigrants inevitably set the stage for determining how US racial boundaries will be redrawn ... but it is the native-born offspring who will ultimately set the future course” (Bean et al. 2010).
Introduction

“Foreign-born immigrants inevitably set the stage for determining how US racial boundaries will be redrawn ... but it is the native-born offspring who will ultimately set the future course” (Bean et al. 2010).

This study is an attempt to provide a brief yet broad portrayal of the relative socioeconomic status of the 2nd generation Korean Americans.
Data

- The 2007–2011 American Community Survey (5 year combined IPUMS sample)
- Korean Americans
  1. 1st, 1.5, and 2nd Generations
  2. Single Ethnic Koreans and Multi Racial/Ethnic Koreans
- Compared with
  1. Other US-born racial groups: non-Hispanic whites; non-Hispanic blacks; and Hispanics
  2. Other 2nd generation Asian ethnic groups: Chinese; Japanese; Filipino; Asian Indian; Vietnamese; Cambodian/Hmong/Laos; Other South Asians; and Other Asians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Est. Pop Size</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Koreans</strong></td>
<td>1,618,487</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single Ethnic Koreans</strong></td>
<td>(1,429,026)</td>
<td>(88.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1st Generation</td>
<td>773,387</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1.5 Generation</td>
<td>313,558</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2nd Generation</td>
<td>342,081</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multi Racial/Ethnic Koreans</strong></td>
<td>(189,461)</td>
<td>(11.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1st Generation</td>
<td>6,050</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1.5 Generation</td>
<td>25,604</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2nd Generation</td>
<td>157,807</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes:* US Population is 315 millions. Korean Americans account for slightly more than 0.5%.
Age

- Mean age:
  - SE Koreans: 1st G (50); 1.5 G (25); 2nd G (20)
  - MR Koreans: 1st G (49); 1.5 G (30); 2nd G (16)

- Working age (25-64) pop (%):
  - SE Koreans: 1st G (75); 1.5 G (50); 2nd G (25)
  - MR Koreans: 1st G (69); 1.5 G (65); 2nd G (24)
  - Whites (54); Hispanics (32); Chinese (29); Japanese (52); Asian Indian (16)
### % Single Household (Among Household Heads)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Other Group</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Korean Americans</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Koreans</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single Ethnic Koreans</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Generation</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Generation</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multi Racial/Ethnic Koreans</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Generation</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Generation</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>Cam/Hmong/Laos</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Generation</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>Other South Asians</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Demographic Variables

- 2nd G single-ethnic Koreans are less likely to be married, tend to have less children, and have smaller family size than 1st/1.5 generation Koreans or other racial/ethnic groups.
Other Demographic Variables

- 2nd G single-ethnic Koreans are less likely to be married, tend to have less children, and have smaller family size than 1st/1.5 generation Koreans or other racial/ethnic groups.

- % female headed household has slightly increased in 2nd G (45%) compared to 1st G (40%). Around 52-3% of HH among multi racial/ethnic Koreans are female headed. Whites (44%), Blacks (63%), Chinese (42%), Cam/Hmong/Laos (53%).
Other Demographic Variables

- 2nd G single-ethnic Koreans are less likely to be married, tend to have less children, and have smaller family size than 1st/1.5 generation Koreans or other racial/ethnic groups.
- % female headed household has slightly increased in 2nd G (45%) compared to 1st G (40%). Around 52-3% of HH among multi racial/ethnic Koreans are female headed. Whites (44%), Blacks (63%), Chinese (42%), Cam/Hmong/Laos (53%).
- In terms of residential areas, no difference across generations. Metro (65-70%). West (41-49%). Multi-racial/ethnic Koreans are more geographically dispersed than single-ethnic Koreans.
% Bachelor or Higher (Age 25-64)
Educational Attainments (Age 25-64)

- No difference between men and women.
- 1st G SE Korean: 34% BA, 19% Grad.
- 2nd G SE Korean: 43% BA, 28% Grad.
- LTHS + HSG among 2nd G SE Koreans is only 9%. (Whites: 34%; Blacks 49%; Hispanics 45%).
## Language Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Speak English Very Well</th>
<th>Speak Korean at Home</th>
<th>Speak English at Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>25-64</td>
<td>5-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Koreans</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Ethnic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1st Gen</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1.5 Gen</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>63.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2nd Gen</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>94.0</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi R/E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1st Gen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1.5 Gen</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 2nd Gen</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
% Self Employment (Age 25-64, Currently Working)
Annual Earnings (Age 25-64, Currently Working)
Net Earnings (Dis)Advantage of 2nd Generation Korean American Men Compared to Whites

![Graph showing earnings gap based on level of education for different groups, including Single Ethnic 2nd Generation Korean Men, Multi Racial/Ethnic 2nd Generation Korean Men, US-born Hispanic Men, and 2nd Generation Asian American Men.](image)
Net Earnings (Dis)Advantage of 2nd Generation Korean American Women Compared to Whites
### % White Collar Occupation vs. % Blue Collar Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single-ethnic Korean</th>
<th>Multi-ethnic Korean</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White Collar</td>
<td>Blue Collar</td>
<td>White Collar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Men</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Than High School</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>98.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B. Women

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than High School</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
% Under Poverty Line (All respondents)
Gini Inequality Index of Annual Household Income

1st SE Korean, 1.5 SE Korean, 2nd SE Korean, 1st ME Korean, 1.5 ME Korean, 2nd ME Korean, White, Black, Hispanics, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Cam/Hmo/Laos
Conclusions: 1st vs 2nd Generations

- The socioeconomic attainments of Korean Americans have substantially improved between the 1st and 2nd generations.
Conclusions: 1st vs 2nd Generations

- The socioeconomic attainments of Korean Americans have substantially improved between the 1st and 2nd generations.
- Comparing the 1st generation Korean immigrants, the 2nd Generation’s
  1. % college educated was up by 35%.
  2. labor market participation rates grew by 25%.
  3. the mean annual earnings was up by 38%.
  4. those who work as professionals or managers increased by 45%.
  5. while, the self-employment rate went down by 69%.
Diversity within Korean Americans

- Diversity within Korean Americans has increased.
  1. More than 99% of the 1st generation Korean immigrants are single-ethnic Koreans.
  2. while 31% of the 2nd generation Korean Americans are multi-racial or multi-ethnic Korean Americans.
Diversity within Korean Americans

- Diversity within Korean Americans has increased.
  - More than 99% of the 1st generation Korean immigrants are single-ethnic Koreans.
  - While 31% of the 2nd generation Korean Americans are multi-racial or multi-ethnic Korean Americans.

- The extent of socioeconomic achievements of multi-racial/ethnic Korean Americans seems to be lower than single-ethnic Koreans.
Diversity within Korean Americans

- Diversity within Korean Americans has increased.
  1. More than 99% of the 1st generation Korean immigrants are single-ethnic Koreans.
  2. while 31% of the 2nd generation Korean Americans are multi-racial or multi-ethnic Korean Americans.

- The extent of socioeconomic achievements of multi-racial/ethnic Korean Americans seems to be lower than single-ethnic Koreans.

- Nonetheless, multi-racial/ethnic Korean Americans experienced a similar upward socioeconomic mobility over generations like single-ethnic Korean Americans.
Relative Socioeconomic Status of the 2nd Gen Koreans

The 2nd Korean Americans

- are substantially more educated than native-born non-Hispanic whites let alone blacks and Hispanics.
Relative Socioeconomic Status of the 2nd Gen Koreans

The 2nd Korean Americans

- are substantially more educated than native-born non-Hispanic whites let alone blacks and Hispanics.
- earn more than whites (30% higher than whites on average), partially due to high educational attainments.
Relative Socioeconomic Status of the 2nd Gen Koreans

The 2nd Korean Americans

- are substantially more educated than native-born non-Hispanic whites let alone blacks and Hispanics.
- earn more than whites (30% higher than whites on average), partially due to high educational attainments.
- are acquiring more prestigious occupations than whites.
Relative Socioeconomic Status of the 2nd Gen Koreans

The 2nd Korean Americans

- are substantially more educated than native-born non-Hispanic whites let alone blacks and Hispanics.
- earn more than whites (30% higher than whites on average), partially due to high educational attainments.
- are acquiring more prestigious occupations than whites.
- are the 3rd highest income earners among Asian ethnic groups (after Asian Indian and Chinese).
Despite these high socioeconomic achievements,

- Korean American men still seem to endure some (probably race-related) disadvantages in American labor markets.
Despite these high socioeconomic achievements,

- Korean American men still seem to endure some (probably race-related) disadvantages in American labor markets.
- Comparing to equally educated white counterparts, Korean American men earn 17% less unless they have a graduate degree.
Despite these high socioeconomic achievements,

- Korean American men still seem to endure some (probably race-related) disadvantages in American labor markets.
- Comparing to equally educated white counterparts, Korean American men earn 17% less unless they have a graduate degree.
- This is a similar extent of disadvantage that Hispanic American men have in American labor markets.
Despite these high socioeconomic achievements,

- Korean American men still seem to endure some (probably race-related) disadvantages in American labor markets.
- Comparing to equally educated white counterparts, Korean American men earn 17% less unless they have a graduate degree.
- This is a similar extent of disadvantage that Hispanic American men have in American labor markets.
- Contrary to men, Korean American women do not suffer from earnings disadvantage compared to whites.
Within-group Inequality is a concern.

- High poverty rate.
- Highest within-group inequality than any other racial/ethnic groups.
Within-group Inequality is a concern.

- High poverty rate.
- Highest within-group inequality than any other racial/ethnic groups.
- A new challenge that Korean Americans and Asian Americans in general face in the 21st century is likely to be rising class inequalities within the same ethnic group.
Thank you!

chkim@ku.edu