Teenage Participants of the 2008 Candlelight Vigil: *Their Social Characteristics and Changes in Political Views**

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Abstract

The current research attempts to investigate the questions of who the participants in the candlelight vigil of 2008 were and how they have changed over time. In order to answer these questions, we used survey data collected in June 2008, which was used as a basis for follow-up research of the same respondents in September 2008 and July 2009. In the first part of our analysis, we examine the general characteristics of the participant teens. We found that the participants were not very different from nonparticipant teens in terms of their social background, such as class identity and GPAs. In the latter part of the paper, we analyze how the teens evaluated the candlelight vigil after one year. We found that the participants tend to define themselves as the "candlelight generation" and share a strong feeling of "we-ness." It was also found that the respondents were strongly influenced by the experience of participating in the candle protest in terms of political consciousness.

Keywords: candlelight vigil, American beef import, teen politics, candle generation, social movement

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Introduction

The Korean government announced that the U.S.-Korea trade talk on beef was resolved on April 18, 2008. The next day, there was a celebrative summit meeting between the two countries' presidents, George W. Bush and Lee Myung-bak. The agreement was a surprise not only because it was so quickly signed without consulting the Korean populace but also because the contents were beyond the public's expectations. Korea agreed to open its domestic market to U.S. beef regardless of the age of the cow, i.e., even cows over 30 months old. The ban on specified risk materials (SRM) such as skulls and brains was lifted as well. The agreement also implied that the Korean government alone cannot stop the import of American beef, even when bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) is found in it without consulting the United States (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, May 5, 2008).

Many Koreans believed that President Lee Myung-bak's sudden decision to completely liberalize the import of American beef was an effort to facilitate the Korea-U.S. FTA, which he considered to be delayed because of the conflict between the two nations over the issue of beef. He emphasized that Korean beef producers may have to sacrifice their interests for the sake of national economic growth and job creation, which would be brought about by the Korea-U.S. FTA. Lee's decision was met with discontent and anger, which developed into massive protests, which lasted for more than 100 days beginning on May 2, 2008. Upset by Lee's unwillingness to respond to the people's voice, many participants demanded his resignation in June.

Before the protest on April 29, a TV documentary program, *PD Notebook* which aired on MBC, one of three major national broadcasting companies in South Korea, dealt with the danger of BSE beef, which elicited great interest and concern among Koreans. Afterwards, an online community proposed to have a candlelight cultural event on May 2 to express the public's concern about U.S. beef. The day unexpectedly set a historical precedent as it was followed by more than three months of candlelight vigils, consisting of cultural events,

street walking, and group discussions in the middle of Seoul.

Many scholars have attempted to evaluate the meaning of candlelight politics in the context of social change in Korea and how its particularity and generality can be assessed comparatively. Foreign scholars have commented on the dynamics and the unique features of the candlelight vigil in Korea. Ulrich Beck, for instance, stated that the risk faced by a society could lead to a formation of a sociopolitical power that would radically change the political horizon. He added that Korean candlelight politics demanded that the Korean government, faced with the "global risk society," choose between the market and the people (*Hankyoreh*, June 26, 2008). Beck viewed the risk as a new social agenda that had become an engine for social reform in Korea. French social philosopher Jacques Rancière observed the power of democracy in candlelight gatherings. He commented, "In Korea, collective power separated from the state apparatus is transformed into a spectacle such as people filling the street with candles" (Ranciere 2010, 131). British political sociologist Bob Jessop interpreted the candlelight vigil as a case where a social movement could be reconstructed in an ecopolitical manner. The citizens had reframed health, conventionally a personal issue, into an issue of "life politics" or "biopolitics," which includes the global dimension. Jessop concluded that the candlelight vigil was a marvelous event where the life politics issue could radically reorganize everyday life (*Hankyoreh*, November 27, 2008).

Fascinated by the novelty and dynamics of candlelight protests, quite a number of articles celebrating new forms of democracy were published. The main body of research paid attention to the newness of actors, mobilization, and issues. Teens and females played a major role as new actors, while the online community, mobile phones, and personal mobile broadcasting systems were new means of mobilizing. Food, life, and risk have become important issues of the new politics in 2008 (H. Kim 2008; C. Kim and S. Kim 2009; C. Lee 2009; H. Lee 2009; Jo 2009). Less fascinated with candle politics and disappointed by the sterile result in terms of radical social change, progressive scholars attempted to raise macro questions of democracy, party

politics, class issues, and neoliberal politico-economic structures. They pointed out that the candlelight protests were limited in terms of social structural change and low working-class participation (Kang 2008; Choi 2008; PCDB 2009).[1]

Unfortunately, while there have been a lot of arguments and debates, not much empirical research was published. Many studies rather quickly took a position based on either political stance or theoretical orientation and interpreted the candlelight politics from their point of view. Abstract theoretical and political discourse dominated the discussion while little empirical evidence was presented. The arguments were often groundless.

As a result of the lack of empirical research, sufficient attention was not paid to more substantive issues and micro-levels of behavior and attitude of the actual participants. Many questions, like who participated and why, what they thought, and what they did during the one hundred plus days of candlelight protests, went unanswered. For this reason, Korean social scientists were not able to provide a solid explanation for the sociological significance of the 2008 candlelight vigil. The sterility in the existing debates has a lot to do with the failure to analyze the particularities of the candlelight vigil, which could have been examined by in-depth empirical research of the actors.

This is why our research attempted to understand the candlelight teens via an explicitly empirical approach. One of the most prominent features of the 2008 candlelight vigil was the active role played by teenagers. Teens, who were seldom regarded as important actors in political events, came forward and lit candles in 2008. This action developed into one of the most significant social movements in Korea's dynamic political history. It was estimated by police that among approximately 20,000 participants on May 3, 2008, 60 to 70 percent were middle-school and high-school students. "Candlelight girls" surfaced as an important icon due to girls and young women who served as the main actors throughout the candle protest period.

1. For a more detailed critical review of existing literature on the 2008 candlelight vigil, see C. Kim et al. (2010).

The participant teens actively used the Internet and cell phone texts to organize themselves and criticize the president and "adults" who were forcing them to eat what they viewed as potentially dangerous beef. Conservative media labeled these teens as "naïve kids who were conned by rumors on mad cow disease"; the Department of Education and teachers attempted to ban the teenagers from participating in the gatherings.

It is uncommon to observe teens initiating a massive social movement, even from a global perspective. Furthermore, considering the situation where Korean teenagers, whose lives are so deeply controlled by school for the sake of preparing for the stiff competition of college admission, it is quite puzzling to find this unusual amount of political activity by young students.

In an attempt to solve this puzzle, we will analyze the social characteristics of teenage participants and the changes in their sociopolitical views a year or so after the candlelight vigil. By doing so, we will have a better idea of what happened in Korea in the summer of 2008. We also hope to contribute to the theoretical discourse on new social activism, the sociology of life politics, and the sociology of generation.

In order to achieve these goals, we will carry out the following tasks. First, we will highlight the key features of participant teens by comparing them with nonparticipant teens. For this purpose we asked the following questions: Who were the participants? How often did they participate? Why did they participate? Were the participants different from nonparticipants in terms of their attitudes and behaviors? Second, we will attempt to examine how the teenage participants remember their participation. In addition, we will analyze how the participants have changed over time in terms of their political views and identities.

Survey and Data

Our data consists of four surveys conducted during the period of June 2008 and August 2009. We would like to introduce some important features of our research methods.

First, our survey was done on-site while the candlelight gathering was taking place, not afterwards. Most social movement research tends to collect data after the movement's life cycle is completed and thus relies on a participant's memory, often of the leaders because it is almost impossible to trace the general participants afterwards. This type of survey is vulnerable to sample selection bias and errors due to time flow, both at an individual level and societal level. These errors lower the credibility of data collected. Second, we conducted a survey of nonparticipant teenagers from Seoul and other metro areas with similar questions other than participating in the candlelight vigil. This survey data will be used to compare the participant teenagers with nonparticipants. Third, the second survey of the participants, i.e., the same respondents who answered our first survey at Seoul City Square, was conducted right after the candlelight protests ended in September 2008. We hoped to understand how the respondents had changed in the three-month interval, especially since the social atmosphere had changed radically and the social movement was over. Fourth, we conducted a follow-up survey a year later to see how the participants had changed over time. This enabled us to have a panel of data from the same respondents who participated in a social movement, which is not very common either in Korea and other parts of the world. That is, we were able to accumulate three comparable data sets of the same respondent group. The data, collected at different times in June 2008, September 2008, and August 2009, could then be compared to see how the respondents changed over time. Thanks to this panel data, we were able to attempt a more dynamic analysis that considered the impact of participation, the changes over time, and group differentiation.[2] Furthermore, we were

2. The panel data can provide a solid ground for a causal inference as it shows the

able to build a ground for future research on how the experience of 2008 would affect the life course of the participants over a longer time frame.

Let us explain our method more concretely. The first survey was done in June at Seoul City Square. The population consisted of teenagers who participated in the candlelight vigil and sample data from 333 teens was collected. We wanted to know who the participants of the candlelight vigil were. The survey consisted of 43 questions with topics ranging from social background to participation behavior to everyday life. A similar questionnaire was used to conduct a survey of nonparticipants. The population consisted of high-school students residing in Seoul and metro areas. The sample was allocated based on age and gender to make the data comparable with the survey of participants.[3] Four hundred forty-one respondents were used for analysis.

The second survey on the participants was done after three months, in September, to monitor how they had changed. The second survey was done online and 112 out of 333 initial survey respondents. Approximately a year later, the third survey was conducted by sending out questionnaires to the 333 respondents. Efforts were made to increase the response rate, credibility, and representation. Thanks to these efforts, we were able to achieve a relatively high response rate of 33.5 percent, and the final 112 cases were fairly representative of the first respondents in terms of social and demographic characteristics.

Table 1 shows basic information of the respondents for the three survey results. Females outnumber males in all three surveys; the gender ratio is approximately 7:3. Among the first respondents, high school students comprised 66.1 percent while middle-school students accounted for 33.9 percent. We can see from the table that approxi-

change of participants over time (Klandermans and Smith 2002, 19-20).

3. Because of time and budget limits, the nonparticipants were selected not randomly even though we did attempt to maintain similar composition of respondents in terms of age and gender. For a more detailed information on sampling and survey procedures, see Kim, Kim, and Lee (2008).

Table 1. Three Surveys and Respondents by Gender and School

Unit: % (N)

	Middle school (12-14 yrs old)		High school (15-17 yrs old)		College (18 yrs old)		Preparing for college again (18 yrs old)		Total
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female	
1st survey	8.5	25.4	21.1	45.0					100.0(333)
2nd survey	8.0	20.5	20.5	50.9					100.0(112)
3rd survey	4.5	7.2	18.9	38.7	5.4	20.7	1.8	2.7	100.0(112)

mately 31.3 percent of the teenage participants in the first survey had graduated from high school and became either college students or were in preparation for college entrance for the second survey.

Social Characteristics of Teenage Participants

One of the key features of the candlelight vigil was the high representation of female students. Much discussion took place regarding the question of "why girls?" This is a difficult question to answer scientifically, but a number of hypothetical explanations were proposed. Based on interviews and surveys, we felt that females were much more sensitive to the issues of life and food (C. Kim and S. Kim 2009; C. Kim and S. Seo 2009; Y. Kim 2009). As food risk is becoming more visible socially and food-related accidents are occurring with greater frequency, females have expressed their concern about food and health much more than their male counterparts have. In addition, female teenagers were much more relational in their interaction with friends. For example, boys were interested in sports and online games, whereas girls were interested in talking about everyday issues with friends and online chatting. We found in the third survey that teenagers themselves thought that females participated in the candlelight vigil more often because females were "social-relation oriented" (C. Kim et al. 2010).

We asked the socioeconomic status of the participants in terms of their subjective evaluation and their parents' educational level. According to their own evaluation, 2.4 percent were upper class, 16.5 percent were upper-middle class, 59.0 percent were middle class, 19.6 percent were lower-middle class, and 2.4 percent were lower class (see table 2). Education levels of respondents' fathers were as follows: 5.8 percent equal or lower than middle-school diploma, 45.8 percent equal or lower than a high-school diploma, 37.5 percent equal or lower than a college education, and 10.8 percent higher than graduate school. This education level is slightly higher than the national average of males in their forties.[4] What we can say from the data is that teenagers who participated in the candlelight vigil were not much different from other teens; they were not teenagers from the lower class, who were unhappy with their social class, as portrayed in the conservative media.

Table 2. Participants by Social Background

Unit: %

	Subjective Status				Father's Education		
	Higher than upper middle	Middle	Lower than lower middle	Total	Lower than high school	Higher than college	Total
Total	18.9	59.0	22.0	100.0	51.6	48.4	100.0
Male	22.1	50.5	27.4	100.0	45.8	54.2	100.0
Female	17.7	62.5	19.8	100.0	54.1	45.9	100.0

Table 3 is a summary of self-reported academic performance of both participant and nonparticipant teenagers. According to our survey, 66.5 percent of participants were better ranked than upper-middle levels and only 12.4 percent were ranked lower than lower-middle levels. Among the high-school students, 72.2 percent of participants

4. For a theoretical discussion on the social activism, see C. Kim et al. (2010).

responded that their academic stance was better than upper middle class, while only 60.9 percent of nonparticipants responded as such. What we can verify here is that the participants were not "losers" (slang word that has become prevalent in Korea recently) who did not adjust well at school or whose GPAs were low.

Table 3. Academic Performance at School: Participants and Nonparticipants

Unit: %

		Very poor	Poor	Mediocre	Good	Very good	Excellent	Total
All participants	Total	2.7	9.7	21.1	39.9	17.8	8.8	100.0
	Male	6.1	12.2	20.4	33.7	16.4	9.2	100.0
	Female	1.3	8.6	21.5	42.5	17.6	8.6	100.0
Participant high-school students	Total	0.0	8.7	19.2	45.2	19.2	7.8	100.0
	Male	0.0	12.9	21.4	38.6	18.6	8.6	100.0
	Female	0.0	6.7	18.1	48.3	19.5	7.4	100.0
Non-participant high-school students	Total	2.1	10.0	27.6	43.7	14.9	2.3	100.0
	Male	4.7	11.7	25.8	37.5	14.1	6.3	100.0
	Female	1.0	8.3	28.3	46.3	14.3	0.7	100.0

The next issue is how often the participants participated in the protests. In the first survey done in June 2008, the majority (more than 63.6 percent) were "first-time participants." This is interesting because mid-June 2008 is generally regarded as a period when the vigil was transforming into a different event. It is generally argued that after June 10, which is a historic day in Korean politics (a great civil uprising occurred in 1987), teenagers retreated from the candlelight vigil and new actors such as conventional social movement organizations began to dominate the activism. Yet, our survey showed that still "newcomers" of teenagers were gathering to see and participate firsthand in the candlelight vigil. It was not a handful of "professional teenage activists" who directed the protests but a wide

range of teenagers who participated voluntarily. In the second survey, we asked why they did not participate continuously and their answer was not because they became uninterested but because they were too busy with academic workload. The third survey done a year later showed that 48 percent of total respondents participated once, while 37 percent participated 2 to 9 times, and 15 percent participated more than 10 times.

Why did the teenagers organize and participate in the candlelight vigils? The main motives for the candle politics of 2008 were "anger" toward government policy and "fear" of potential BSE.[5] The immediate emotional response of the teenagers to the government policy to import U.S. beef was fear of fatal risk due to mad cow disease. In the early stages of the candlelight vigil, this fear led them to show themselves on the street. For teens who had no choice but to eat from the school lunch program, the fear of BSE was real and very serious. Collective action ensued. This fear was intensified with the TV documentary, *PD Notebook*, which dealt with human Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and showed some shocking video clips of downer cows in the United States. Some of the video clips quickly spread through the Internet and the fear increased, which gave way to anger toward the government. While fear may be an emotion reflecting immediate uneasiness about risk, anger is a rational and aggressive attitude toward a certain target. The anger was explicitly directed toward Lee Myung-bak's government, which failed to guarantee basic rights of the people and food sovereignty (C. Kim and S. Kim 2009).

When asked what the key motive for participating in the candlelight vigil for the first time was, the majority of responses were emotional ones, either anger or fear. Our survey showed that anger toward Lee's government (56.1 percent) was more important than fear of BSE (14.6 percent). While fear and anger were both important for the participants, it seems anger played a more important role in terms of motivating them to act. Mobilization by media or friends

5. Emotions can play an important role in the rise, development, and demise of social movement (Aminzade and McAdam 2001; Gould 2004).

was less important.

We have examined how fear, anger, and mobilization played different roles among different groups of teenagers. Our cross-tab analysis showed that it was the female high-school students who chose anger the most (71 percent) as the main reason for first showing up at the candlelight vigil and fear only accounted for 11.3 percent of participants (see table 4). In contrast, for male middle-school students, fear was quite high at 29.2 percent. It seems high-school girls were the most active agents who translated their anger into a more aggressive feeling against Lee Myung-bak's policies.

Table 4. Reason for Participation by Gender and School

Unit: %

	Gender and School			
	Middle school male	Middle school female	High school male	High school female
Fear	29.2	19.7	11.1	11.3
Anger	54.2	50.7	55.6	71.1
Others	16.6	29.6	33.3	17.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Finally, let us turn to the question of what their interests were and how they behaved in their everyday lives before the vigil. It turned out that the participants were not very different from other ordinary teens. The participants were also very concerned about their GPAs and futures, just like other teens in Korea. Among eight items such as health, food safety, social issues, political issues, entertainers, appearances, GPA, and the future, both participants and nonparticipants picked the future and GPA as the most important concerns for them. For both participants and nonparticipants, the future was the most important issue at 4.50/5.00 and 4.40/5.00 respectively. An interesting difference surfaces when we turn to other issues. Generally speaking, participants were more interested in issues such as health, food safe-

ty, social issues, and political issues than nonparticipants. In contrast, nonparticipants were more interested in issues such as entertainers and appearance (see table 5).

Table 5. Interest in Various Issues: Participants vs. Nonparticipants (points out of 5)

	Participant High-School Students			Nonparticipant High-School Students		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Health	3.83	3.89	3.82	3.67	3.64	3.68
Food safety	3.80	3.80	3.81	3.48	3.33	3.55
Social issues	3.94	3.91	3.95	3.63	3.70	3.59
Political issues	3.61	3.64	3.59	3.21	3.09	3.26
Entertainers	3.11	2.99	3.16	2.99	2.88	3.04
Appearance	3.47	3.31	3.54	3.51	3.37	3.57
GPA	4.09	4.06	4.10	4.14	4.04	4.19
Future	4.50	4.53	4.49	4.40	4.33	4.43

We found that the participants were active in social activities in general prior to the candlelight vigils. When we asked "How often did you participate in social activities before the candlelight?" it turned out that the participants of the candlelight vigil had much more experience in various social activities than nonparticipants. For example, 32.0 percent of protest participants had been actively participating in student organizations or school club activities, while the percentage for nonparticipants for the same activities was only 16.6 percent. Most significant was the difference in participation in social organizations and social assemblies/gatherings. The candlelight teens actively participated in social organizations and social assemblies five to ten times more than ordinary teens who did not participate in the candlelight vigil (see table 6). This shows that the candlelight teens had more experience in social gathering and that their social network was much broader than that of nonparticipants.

Table 6. Experience in Social Activities: Participants vs. Nonparticipants

Unit: %

	Participant High-School Students				Nonparticipant High-School Students			
	Active	Mediocre	None	Total	Active	Mediocre	None	Total
In-school clubs	32.0	43.8	24.2	100.0	16.6	50.6	32.8	100.0
Out-of-school clubs	18.3	39.0	42.7	100.0	10.7	31.0	58.3	100.0
Social organizations	10.6	37.2	52.3	100.0	2.3	17.1	80.6	100.0
Social gatherings & assemblies	11.0	37.2	51.8	100.0	1.1	13.4	85.6	100.0

Candlelight Teens, One Year Later

Memory and Collective Identity

The candlelight vigil of 2008 can be interpreted as an incomplete revolution from a conventional way of assessing social movements, emphasizing goal achievement and radical social change. However, the candlelight vigil exerted a great influence on individuals who participated in terms of their identity, social attitudes, and political views. This is an unintended result and less examined, yet important, sociological issue.

In this section, we explore how the participants have changed over time from June 2008 to July 2009. Concretely, we will analyze how the teens remember their experiences, how their attitude has changed, and what effect the candlelight vigil had on their behavior. We can assume that candlelight protests were important political experiences for the teens in creating their life history.

How did the teens who participated in the protests define and evaluate the candlelight vigil a year later? The respondents in the third survey answered as follows: 41.4 percent said it was a "movement to protect a citizen's rights"; 27 percent said it was a "move-

ment to defend democracy"; 20.7 percent said it was a "movement for social reform"; and 10.8 percent said it was a "movement to protect life and safety." Generally speaking, the candlelight vigil of 2008 was remembered as a social movement for citizens' rights and democracy.

Then we asked the respondents to express how much they agreed with several statements evaluating the candlelight vigil. Among various definitions, "a movement to protect food sovereignty" received the highest percentage of agreement at 73.2 percent, which was followed by "a movement against Lee Myung-bak's government" (66.6 percent) and "a movement to shun BSE fear" (62.1 percent).

The way by which the teens interpreted the candlelight vigil and democracy was multilayered. Expectations were not met by accomplishments. The teens had high expectations by saying that "the candlelight vigil would bring about democracy" (3.94/5.0) in the second survey. Yet, evaluation of their accomplishments a year later was lower as the average score was 3.38 for the statement "candlelight vigil brought about democracy." In other words, the candlelight teens thought their action would make a difference for democracy, while their feeling of efficacy decreased as the reality proved to be quite different. It can be interpreted that the teens learned to see the direct relationship between social activism and social structure. However, they also experienced the hardship of failure through their action.

Despite the failure, the teens held firm to a strong sense of pride in having taken part in the candlelight vigil. They were proud that their demand and mobilization developed into a massive social movement. The teens emphasized that participation in the candlelight protests was based on their own decision and initiative. Table 7 shows that the disapproval rate for the statement such as "there was an instigator" and "the candlelight vigil was caused by incorrect information" was high at 64.3 percent and 59.4 percent respectively. The only statement that received a higher approval than disapproval was "the character of the candlelight vigil had changed over time" (42.9 percent approved while only 16.1 percent disapproved). Teenage participants, while they were proud to be the first in the candlelight

protests, were critical of the fact that their agenda and presence became less important than other actors such as labor and politics and NGOs joined in the middle stage of the protests.[6]

Table 7. Evaluation of the Candlelight Vigil a Year Later

Unit: %

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Manipulated by instigators	41.1	23.2	22.3	9.8	3.6	100.0
Caused by incorrect information	27.0	32.4	20.7	12.6	7.2	100.0
The image of Korea has worsened	45.4	27.7	19.6	3.6	2.7	100.0
The nature of the candlelight vigil had changed over time	5.4	10.7	41.1	25.9	17.0	100.0

How they remember the candlelight vigil is an important base for the question of identity formation of the participants, because the collective memory of group members is an important resource for collective identity. The identity of the social movement participants is constructed through dynamic processes of participation experience, memory, and redefinition (Melucci 1995; Lim 1999; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Klandermans 2004). The new identity that was created

6. The candlelight vigil of 2008 had its life cycle as a social movement during 100 days of "culture nights" and protests. At varying stages, different actors played a key role. It was during the first few weeks that teens and mothers were the main actors, while conventional social movement organizations began to emerge and even compete with the teens in June. As police began to brutally crack down on the people in late June, the number of teens decreased rapidly (H. Lee 2008, 80).

exerts influence on the life course of the participants, which is an unintended micro-scale effect at the individual level (McAdam 1988; 1989). This collective construction of memory and identity, in turn, can be an important resource for creating social movement actors.[7] That is, the teenagers who participated in the candlelight vigil of 2008, thanks to their participation in the protest, their collective memory, and redefinition of what it meant to them, may become actors in social movements in later stages of their lives. This is a general theoretical question that arises, but we will be humble and ask a more empirical question of what happened to the participants in terms of social and political views as a result of participation in the vigil. By answering this question, we can judge whether the teens have formed a collective identity through the candlelight vigil participation.

Based on our follow-up surveys showing the passage of time, we can say that the candlelight vigil is still an ongoing event for many participants in terms of memory. Candlelight teens seem to identify themselves as a new generation of political actors based on participation experience and solidarity. Generational identity is an important mediator between the cohort effect of a generation and generational experience. Among the 112 respondents to the third survey, approximately 63 percent said they agree that they are the "candlelight generation" and 20 percent had a very strong identity of "candlelight generation." Only one-seventh of the respondents disapproved the labeling of "candlelight generation." When we did a cross tabulation, those who participated in the protests more frequently had a stronger identity. We can interpret that the participation in the protests was important for building generational identity.

One interesting finding is that the strong feeling of "we-ness" continues to remain even after more than a year. As table 8 shows, 74.1 percent of those who participated in the candlelight protests have the

7. Individual participation in a social movement can build collective identity among the participants as they share a common memory. The collective identity affects individual's biography, which may lead to participation in other social movements later in his/her life (Hunt and Benford 2004, 448-449).

strong sense of belonging to "we." In addition, more than 50 percent of respondents thought that they represented the general feeling of teenagers in Korea. These feelings of unity and representation are important elements for constructing a collective identity, which can develop into a politics of social recognition (Lim 1999). The teen participants also responded that they participated in the candlelight vigil to demand their social and political rights (59.8 percent).

The teen participants demonstrated the possibility of becoming political actors as they acknowledge the new identity of a political generation. What is more significant is that their participation in the candlelight vigil generated a social justice movement capable of attracting government attention to recognize the social and political rights of the teens. It can be interpreted that the teens as new actors were involved in the "politics of recognition" to guarantee their rights. In this respect, the candlelight vigil was a "Declaration of Rights of the Teens." As the teens attempted to advance their agenda in the existing sociopolitical sphere and make their voices heard, candlelight teens acquired the potential to form a distinct generational identity. It can be said that the teen participants have begun to realize themselves as political actors by politicizing the initially apolitical

Table 8. Teen Evaluation of the Candlelight Vigil

Unit: %

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Teens participated in order to demand their social and political rights.	25.9	33.9	21.4	13.4	5.4
The candlelight vigil represented the argument and activities of teens.	10.7	25.9	34.8	22.3	6.3
Teens are indeed a generation that can exert political influence.	15.2	37.5	38.4	14.3	6.3

agenda of beef controversy and by challenging a prejudice that tends to ignore the voice of teens.

Changes in Social and Political Views

The experience of participation in the candlelight vigil greatly affected the teens in terms of political opinion. As we can tell from table 9, candlelight teens in general continue to maintain their political and social views one year after the candlelight vigil. Their consistency demonstrates that their experience was significant enough to indicate the solidarity necessary for future civil society. We are able to say that the participants have acquired an interest in social issues and have become critical of their social reality.

Table 9. Changes in Political View after Participation in the Candlelight Vigil

Unit: %, number

	1st survey			2nd survey			3rd survey		
	Percent agreed	Point/5	S.D.*	Percent agreed	Point/5	S.D.*	Percent agreed	Point/5	S.D.*
Increased patriotism as a Korean	84.2	4.3	0.8	70.5	4.0	1.0	60.3	3.6	1.2
Earned the identity of democratic citizen	82.9	4.3	0.8	80.8	4.2	0.9	76.9	4.1	0.9
Became more interested in social issues	93.4	4.6	0.7	88.5	4.3	0.8	92.3	4.4	0.7
Became more critical of the government	88.2	4.5	0.7	79.5	4.1	0.9	93.6	4.5	0.7

*S.D. = standard deviation.

Table 9 shows that the rates of approval for the statement "I have acquired an identity of the democratic citizen" have remained high throughout the three surveys; the difference was not statistically significant. It can be said that participation in the candlelight vigil served as an important opportunity for the teens to become interested in social issues and to accept the responsibilities of citizenship.

Compared to other items, "patriotism as a Korean" decreased sharply. When the candlelight vigil was active, the teens had a strong feeling of patriotism. But the feeling seemed to have disappeared rapidly as the teens encountered the repressive responses of the government. The pride of being Korean shared by the teens in the early stage of the candlelight protests dwindled away. Disappointment prevailed as the teens experienced the police's disrespect for the people's right to safe food and the constitutional rights of free expression and assembly, and state violence, which resulted in many casualties.

Of great interest is the increased critical attitude of the teenagers toward the Korean government after a year's time. This information can be interpreted such that the teenagers have built a strong antipathy toward Lee Myung-bak's government as the government repressed the candlelight vigil and ignored the voice of citizens. The teens, who took political freedom for granted by having grown up under post-authoritarian culture, have learned the importance of democracy and civil society through the mass experience of the candlelight vigil.

We found that participants have become much more interested in social issues, talk more about political issues with their friends than before, and read more news on social issues. It can be carefully said that the candlelight teens have acquired some distinct social characteristics that may develop into a resource for becoming more promising political actors in the future.

Conclusion

We have tried to understand the social characteristics and changes in

political views of teenage participants of the candlelight vigil of 2008 by analyzing three surveys of a panel. The teens, who were regarded as apolitical actors and social minorities, have come forward and played an important role in one of the most significant social movements in Korean history. Will the candlelight teens become prominent political actors in the future based on what they have learned through their participation in the candlelight protests? We will need further research to answer this important question.

Let us turn to a more general question of democracy in Korea. Is it only the memory of courage and justice coupled with the memory of brutal repression that remains, now that the spectacle of the 2008 vigil has disappeared physically? Has democracy retreated? How will it return? Although the candlelight vigil has ended, its political and social legacy seems to linger even today. The legacy can be seen in a recent episode in which a conservative newspaper in Korea attempted an aggressive backlash against the candlelight vigil in its Two Year Anniversary Special of the event on May 2010. The newspaper argued that the risk of BSE has been proven to be completely unscientific and the participants were deceived by instigators. Instead of scientific discussion and analysis, the newspaper made the argument without evidence for their case, not recognizing the importance of precautionary measures for the sake of citizens' health.

Our research showed that the main causes for the candlelight vigil were people's fear of tainted American beef and their anger toward the government's irresponsibility. Koreans, including teens, were angry that the president disrespected the people's voice for food safety and right for life. But the government and the conservative segment of the mass media do not accept the fact that it was the teens and ordinary citizens, not the "instigators," who voluntarily showed up at Seoul City Square and lit candles.

Some regard the candlelight vigil as an episode of the past, defining it as a failed revolution. Yet, the candlelight vigil is a historical event that has great potential for reignition. As we have seen, the candlelight vigil is still an important resource of contentious politics for many actors, both progressive and conservative. For the teens who

participated in the candlelight vigil, the candlelight is a memory, a scar, and a badge of honor. What kind of role the experience of the event will play as the teens go through the next stage of life is an open question to be answered by the teens themselves, hopefully following their best impulses and principles. What they decide will likely have a great effect on the future political horizon of Korean democracy.

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