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Second-Generation Korean Americans and Electoral Politics*

Dae Young Kim

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Introduction

In 2009, the Korean (Korean alone) population in the United States was roughly 1.3 million, making it the fifth largest Asian American community in the nation (American Community Survey 2009). Among these Korean Americans, the proportion of Koreans raised and schooled in America, i.e. the 1.5 generations (20.7%) and the U.S.-born (23.2%), comprised 43.9% of the Korean American population (ACS 2009).[1] Although their growing numbers and increased visibility in the mainstream are good reasons for paying greater attention to this important segment of the Korean American population, due to its transition from childhood to adulthood, there has been relatively little research regarding their experiences as adults: their experience in the labor market, their sense of identity, and their participation in politics. Without a doubt, how the adult children of Korean immigrants perform economically and organize themselves to advance their social and economic interests, are critical questions that have enormous ramifications for the long-term integration of immigrants and their offspring. Especially important in this regard are questions relative to the political integration of the second generation as politics ultimately decides questions of Americanness and belonging. Thus, understanding how well second-generation Korean Americans are integrating politically is of utmost significance in assessing the prospects of full assimilation for Koreans in the United States.

In this paper, in light of the paucity of research on the political incorporation of Korean Americans, especially those of second-generation Korean Americans, I examine the political engagement of 1.5 and second-generation Korean Americans in electoral politics to better understand second-generation prospects for political integration into the American political mainstream. That is, how do second-generation Korean Americans feel about electoral politics

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1. The second generation is defined as those born in the United States with one Korea-born parent. The 1.5 generation is defined as those born in Korea but who arrived to the United States by the age of 12 and younger. In this paper, for simplicity, I often collapse the 1.5 and second generations together and refer them to as the second generation even though there are a number of important distinctions between the two.

on issues such as registering to vote, joining a political party, and endorsing a co-ethnic candidate? Having been raised and schooled in the United States, do second-generation Korean Americans follow the political attitudes and behavior of mainstream Americans or those of their immigrant parents? Through a discussion of their attitudes and behavior toward formal politics, this paper seeks to provide a general portrait of second-generation participation in and their reasons for engaging in electoral politics.

The Challenges of Political Integration for Korean and Asian Americans

Korean and Asian Americans are increasingly visible in the economic arena; however, in politics, especially formal politics, there is still a perception that Korean and Asian Americans are politically unimportant and expendable.[2] First and foremost, the Asian American population, including the Korean population, pales in size compared to Latino or Black American populations, therefore, garnering very little attention from politicians for the Asian American vote unlike the way they court Black American or Latino voters (Segura 2006).[3] Second, since citizenship is a prerequisite for voting, many Asian Americans, because of their foreign-born status, must first overcome the hurdles of naturalization before they even entertain the idea of registering to vote (Aoki and Takeda 2008; Segura and Rodrigues 2006:380). In addition to these citizenship requirements for electoral participation, there are other constraints that prevent Korean and Asian Americans from voting: limited English proficiency, inadequate knowledge of the American political process,

2. In my discussion of Korean American political participation, references to other Asian Americans will continuously be made given that the political challenges confronting Asian Americans also apply to Korean Americans. While there are interesting differences in political attitudes and behavior among Asian Americans, politicians and mainstream media often fail to notice the ethnic diversity of Asian America, lumping Korean Americans together with other Asian Americans.

3. Latinos have surpassed Black Americans to become the largest minority group in the United States. The population size for each minority group in the United States is as follows: American Indians and Alaska natives (2.5 million), Asian Americans (13.7 million), Black Americans (38 million), Latinos (48 million), and native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (454, 000) (ACS 2009).

and long work hours in family small businesses or ethnic economy jobs. Third, notwithstanding the aforementioned difficulties posed by foreign-birth and immigrant status, politicians perceive Korean and Asian Americans to be culturally apathetic toward politics, and if not, oriented toward homeland politics (Nakanishi and Lai 2003). Finally, because there are no majority Asian districts in the country with the exception of a few districts in California or Hawaii, it is extremely difficult for Asian American officials to appeal to Asian majority districts to win office (Aoki and Takeda 2008; Chung 2007; Kim 2007; Lai et al. 2001).

Undoubtedly, the ability to wield influence in mainstream politics for Korean and Asian American voters is severely constrained by the above challenges. For second-generation Koreans raised and schooled in America, however, although related, a different set of political challenges confront them compared to those that affected first-generation immigrants. It is to those challenges that this paper seeks to examine and discuss to provide a sketch of second-generation Koreans' attempts to break into mainstream politics.

Data and Methods

This study draws upon multiple data sources to present a portrait of Korean American politics. These sources include a publically released data set, a survey coordinated by the author, and follow-up in-depth interviews. The 2004 Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in the Metropolitan Los Angeles (hereafter the 2004 IIMMLA) survey is a publically released data set that contains detailed information on many facets of 1.5 and second-generation life in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, including those of Korean Americans. The entire data set is comprised of six second-generation immigrant (Mexicans, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Koreans, Chinese, and Central Americans from Guatemala and El Salvador) and three native-born (non-Hispanic whites, Blacks, and third- or later-generation Mexican Americans) groups in the metropolitan Los Angeles area (See Rumbaut et al. 2004). For the purposes of this paper, the Korean portion of the data set has been selected for analysis, which contains four hundred 1.5 and second-generation Korean Americans between the ages of 20 and 39. Given that the purpose of the survey was to capture the mobility paths and outcomes of second-generation immigrants,

questions regarding political participation are only a small feature of the survey instrument. Still, given the dearth of survey data on second-generation Koreans (and Korean immigrants in general), the 2004 IIMMLA is arguably one of the most comprehensive publically-available data sets with a sizable number of second-generation Korean Americans.

The second data source used for this study is the 1998 New York Second-Generation Korean American survey (hereafter the 1998 New York survey), a data set which was collected by the author from the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area. The 30-minute telephone survey was conducted from June 1998 through November 1998 with two hundred 1.5 and second-generation Korean Americans between 23 and 35 years old. To generate the final sample of 200 respondents, approximately 24,500 households with Korean surnames were first identified from published telephone directories, followed by a telephone screening of 2,631 randomly selected households to locate eligible second-generation Korean Americans. Although this data set is dated and has issues of comparability with the 2004 IIMMLA, the 1998 New York survey is almost identical to the 2004 IIMMLA in sampling procedure and actually employs the same survey instrument used in that survey. This is because both the 1998 New York and the 2004 IIMMLA surveys are based on the same survey instrument preceding the 2004 IIMMLA – the New York Second-Generation Survey, 1998-2000 (See Kasinitz et al. 2008). Thus, despite several limitations, by piecing together the descriptive statistics of second-generation Korean political participation from these data sources, a broad picture of second-generation political engagement can be obtained.

Finally, to understand why respondents think the way they do, forty follow-up, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a subsample of the 1998 New York survey participants; interviewees were asked to expand on the responses they gave during the telephone survey. These semi-structured, open-ended interviews lasted from one to three hours, were tape recorded, and later transcribed. Because the interview guide expands on the questions from the survey instrument, it covers a range of topics such as family, immigration, neighborhood, schooling, work, religion, politics, and identity. Although the data from these in-depth interviews are again dated and are only available for the New York region, they still offer second-generation Koreans' views of formal politics, including their reasons for acquiring citizenship (for 1.5-generation Koreans), registering to vote, affiliating with a specific political

party, and endorsing a co-ethnic/mainstream candidate. As such, valuable insights can be gained from these narratives, which can be used for improving future survey instruments for the study of immigrant and second-generation politics.

Acquisition of Citizenship

The political process in the United States, particularly participation in electoral politics, remains a daunting task for newcomers, as it involves multiple hurdles such as naturalization, voter registration, and actual voting turnout (Aoki and Takeda 2008; Chi 2005; Ramakrishnan 2005). Given that the proportion of the foreign-born among Korean Americans is roughly three-fourths (74.5%), and the proportion naturalized is one-half (55.6%) (ACS 2009), naturalization may be a major stumbling block for participating in local and national elections, especially for first-generation Koreans.[4] The prospects of naturalization for 1.5-generation Koreans, as indicated in the New York and Los Angeles surveys, however, are much more favorable as the rate of naturalization rises considerably among the Korean New Yorkers and Angelenos. According to the 1998 New York survey, over three-fourths (76.9%) of 1.5-generation Koreans were naturalized while 23.1% had not acquired citizenship. The rate of naturalization among 1.5-generation Korean Angelenos (in the 2004 IIMMLA) was even higher, with 79.9% of 1.5-generation Koreans having become citizens compared to 20.1% that were deferring on their citizenship. (See Table 1)

4. Several recent surveys of the Korean community (published as reports), in particular the 2003 Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area survey (N=303) and the 2006 Southern California survey (N=1047), provide some information about the proportion of citizens among Korean Americans. In the 2003 D.C. survey, 58.1% of the respondents reported being citizens while 29% were permanent residents and 10.2% were non-immigrants. In the 2006 southern California survey, the proportion of citizens was 39% while 33% were permanent residents and 27% belonged to the other category.

Table 1. Unweighted Percentage Distributions (and Sample Sizes) of Naturalization, Voter Registration, and Party Affiliation, the 1998 New York and 2004 IIMMLA Surveys

	1998 New York Survey (N=205)				2004 IIMMLA (N=401)			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
Whether is a citizen	110	76.9	33	23.1	204	79.7	52	20.3
Whether is registered to vote	131	65.8	68	34.2	261	76.3	81	23.7
Party Registered with	Republican	Democrat	Independent		Republican	Democrat	Independent	
	(32) 27.6	(61) 52.6	(23) 19.8		(82) 38.5	(76) 35.7	(55) 25.8	

Comparisons of naturalization between 1.5-generation Korean Angelenos and other second-generation immigrants in the 2004 IIMMLA show that rates of naturalization for Koreans are slightly lower than those of the Chinese (91.3%) and the Vietnamese (91.2%), but considerably higher than those of 1.5-generation Mexicans (45.7%) and Salvadorans (50.6%) (See Table 2). These regional and ethnic comparisons suggest that 1.5-generation Koreans, unlike first-generation Koreans, have greater potential for joining the electorate as a significant proportion of them have overcome a major hurdle to voter eligibility by becoming naturalized.

Yet, roughly a fifth of 1.5-generation Koreans (in the New York and Los Angeles samples) were uninterested in becoming American citizens even though they were eligible to apply for citizenship. When asked about their reasons for delaying naturalization, I was told by a number of second-generation Korean New Yorkers that naturalization for this group offered no particular advantage over permanent residency, except for the right to vote.[5] In short, there was no compelling reason to become naturalized. James, a twenty-

5. As stated earlier in the methods section, follow-up interview data exists for only the 1998 New York study. Although this data is dated and a qualitative discussion of second-generation Korean politics should be understood within the context of a second-generation cohort describing their views of politics at a specific point in time and place, I still use them to situate the reasons behind the patterns that were observed among this group in the survey data. Understandably, interviews with today's second-generation Koreans will elicit a different understanding of and position toward formal politics; yet, some of the themes and reasons that emerged in the late 1990s with that cohort are still likely to resonate with today's second generation, and therefore, have been included in this discussion.

eight-year-old artist, articulated this view: "I never felt the need or the urgency to become a U.S. Citizen."[6] Sungsoo echoed the sentiments of James and also added that non-citizenship did not impair his ability to live and work in the United States. Sungsoo, a twenty-three-year-old man working as an analyst for a consulting firm, explained that "[he] could do things without it."

Table 2. Unweighted Percentage Distributions and Sample Sizes of Having Become Naturalized (1.5 generations) and Having Registered to Vote by 8 Main Ethnic Groups, the 2004 IIMMLA

	Naturalization				Voter Registration			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
Mexican	133	45.7	158	54.3	854	79.7	218	20.3
Salvadoran/Guatemalan	89	50.6	87	49.4	235	83.9	45	16.1
Chinese	199	91.3	19	8.7	286	75.5	93	24.5
Korean	204	79.7	52	20.3	261	76.3	81	23.7
Vietnamese	258	91.2	25	8.8	281	75.7	90	24.3
Filipino	151	80.7	36	19.3	278	77.4	81	22.6
White, non-Hispanic	64	72.7	24	27.3	578	85.6	97	14.4
Black, non-Hispanic	8	66.7	4	33.3	376	86.0	61	14.0

Naturalization: X^2=252.176, df 7, p <.001 (2-sided)
Voter registration: X^2=39.765, df 7, p <.001 (2-sided)

Other members of this group cited "laziness" on their part as a reason for putting off changing their status from permanent residents to U.S. citizens. According to Connie, a twenty-four-year-old working in the fashion industry, her reason for postponing acquiring citizenship was mere laziness on her part, but she did agree that it would be to her advantage to change her status in the near future. She indicated that becoming naturalized was "on the to-do list."

In the case of Bill, a twenty-three-year-old manager of a family dry cleaning business, he put off becoming naturalized because it involved work and was time consuming. According to him, it was the inconvenience factor that seriously delayed his gaining U.S. citizenship although he did consider becoming naturalized in a year or two.

These narratives hint at the role that inertia and instrumentalism play in delaying the acquisition of U.S. citizenship for 1.5-generation Koreans. The

6. All names are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the interviewees.

fact that citizenship brought no tangible benefits except for the right to the franchise was not a sufficient and compelling reason for a segment of this group to change their status from permanent residents to citizens. In other words, unlike major proposals such as the 1994 Republican Party's Contract with America agenda, which proposed to limit welfare benefits for legal residents and thus, created a massive rush to naturalization among legal residents (Portes and Rumbaut 2006:142), there were no significant legislative propositions in 1998 that attempted to limit benefits for permanent residents that would have forced these 1.5-generation Korean New Yorkers to become naturalized. But since 2001, after the terrorist attacks of the World Trade Center on September 11, the stakes of citizenship as the basis for inclusion/exclusion have been raised and may have pushed a number of 1.5-generation Koreans to become naturalized, as reflected in the slightly higher rates of naturalization among 1.5-generation Koreans in Los Angeles. In sum, the prospects for naturalization are considerably encouraging in the 1.5 generations as acculturation and increased state reliance upon citizenship as a basis for societal rewards/penalties drive greater numbers of this generation to take action and change their status in the future.

Voter Registration and Turnout

In light of the higher rates of naturalization exhibited by 1.5-generation Korean Americans, the potential for this group to join and participate in the American citizenry is certainly greater; whether the 1.5-generations translate their newly acquired status as citizens into participation in electoral politics by registering and showing up to vote is a wholly different matter. In the 1998 New York survey, nearly two-thirds (65.8%) of 1.5 and second-generation Koreans were registered to vote; the rate of voter registration was even higher for 1.5 and second-generation Korean Angelenos − 76.3%. Yet, while the rates of voter registration were comparable to those of other second-generation Asian groups in the 2004 IIMMLA, Korean Angelenos were slightly less likely to register to vote than Latinos (79.7% for Mexicans and 83.9% for Salvadorans) and non-Hispanic whites (85.6%) and Blacks (86%).

Also although not the best proxy for voter turnout, the 2004 IIMMLA asked whether respondents had voted in the October 7th, 2004 California

recall election. Measuring voter turnout on the basis of whether they had voted in the recall election, the 2004 IIMMLA indicates that more than half (51.7%) of Korean Angelenos had voted in the recall election.[7] This figure is comparable to other Asian and also Latino groups in the 2004 IIMMLA, but voter turnout for the recall election among Korean Angelenos was considerably lower than that of non-Hispanic whites (70.9%).

Table 3. Unweighted Percentage Distributions and Sample Sizes of Having Voted on Oct. 7 CA Recall Election and Party Affiliation by 8 Main Ethnic Groups, the 2004 IIMMLA

	Voted on CA Recall Election				Party Affiliation					
	Yes		No		Republican		Democrat		Independent	
Mexican	462	59.0	218	41.0	207	20.5	545	53.9	260	25.7
Salvadoran/Guatemalan	136	62.4	45	37.6	61	20.7	171	58.0	63	21.4
Chinese	145	56.6	93	43.4	106	31.6	144	43.0	85	25.4
Korean	119	51.7	81	48.3	127	36.8	140	40.6	78	22.6
Vietnamese	132	51.4	90	48.6	98	29.0	176	52.1	64	18.9
Filipino	139	56.0	81	44.0	121	36.6	139	42.0	71	21.5
White, non-Hispanic	371	70.9	97	29.1	220	37.0	213	35.9	161	27.1
Black, non-Hispanic	194	58.4	61	41.6	45	12.1	254	68.5	72	19.4

Voted on Oct. 7 CA recall election: X^2=44.312, df 7, p <.001 (2-sided)
Political party affiliation: X^2=181.984, df 14, p <.001 (2-sided)

These descriptive statistics of second-generation voter registration and turnout, while limited, suggest greater levels of second-generation participation in electoral politics than for first-generation Koreans.[8] However, contrary

7. The 1998 New York survey, however, did not ask questions about voter turnout.
8. The rate of voter turnout for first-generation Koreans was slightly lower than those of 1.5 and second-generation Koreans. According to Lien et al. (2004:13)'s national survey of Asian American voters – the PNAAPS – Korean immigrants had the lowest turnout rate of all Asian groups in the November 2000 presidential elections: 34%. Yet, two Korean community surveys conducted in the Greater Washington area and California, i.e. the 2003 Baltimore-Washington and the 2006 southern California surveys, show a slightly higher turnout rate for Korean immigrants. In the 2003 D.C. survey, among citizens, 45.6% indicated that they always participate in national elections compared to 24% that responded that they participate infrequently and 30.4% that answered they never participate in national elections. Similarly, in the 2006 southern California survey, 54.7% of the respondents indicated that they had voted in the 2004 presidential elections while 45.3% had not turned out to vote. For those who responded that they had not voted in the 2004 presidential elections, 41% gave being busy or

to conventional political wisdom of higher socioeconomic status generally predicting the political attitudes and behavior of most individuals (Freedman 2000:2-3; Ramakrishnan 2005; Segura and Rodrigues 2006:381), the higher socioeconomic status of Korean Americans did not translate into greater rates of political participation, as voter registration and turnout for Korean and other Asian groups were lower than those of Latinos (in terms of voter registration) and much lower than those of non-Hispanic whites (for both voter registration and turnout) in the 2004 IIMMLA.[9] Kasinitz et al. (2008) also found in their survey of second-generation immigrants in New York that high socioeconomic status was not a strong predictor of political participation for second-generation Chinese and Russians. In fact, relative to other second-generation West Indian and Latino immigrants, second-generation Chinese Americans and Russians were the least likely to vote and participate in politics.

To examine the factors associated with voter registration and turnout, a binary logistic regression was conducted using the 2004 IIMMLA (See Table 4, Appendix A).[10] Results indicate that the demographic/socioeconomic variables (such as education) were not associated with raising/lowering the odds of registering to vote except for age. Age was statistically significantly associated with being registered to vote, and remained significant with the addition of a battery of political items in Model 2. The political items that were associated with raising/lowering the odds of registering to vote were those who agreed with the statements that 'elected officials do not care what people like me think,' 'I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country,' and 'I have contacted a government office about

being uninterested as primary reasons for not voting.

9. Lien et al. (2004) found that the factors associated with the likelihood of registering to vote for eligible Asian American voters in the 2000-2001 PNAPP survey were political interest and party mobilization. Interestingly, she did not find education or income to be strongly associated with voting registration, although these are generally regarded as important variables associated with the likelihood of voting registration for the general population.

10. For ease of interpretation in case of logistic regressions, odds ratios (instead of the coefficients) are presented. Each of the two regression analyses (voter registration and voter turnout) had two specifications. The first specification included demographic characteristics, while the second specification included a battery of political items such as interest in parents' country politics, contacting government, attending political meetings, and so forth. The values of the log likelihood in the second specifications show a slight improvement in the explanatory power of the models.

a problem.' Thus, all else being equal, older second-generation Koreans had higher odds of registering to vote while those who agreed with the statement that 'elected officials do not care' had lower odds of registering to vote (relative to those who disagreed with the statement); those who agreed that they had a 'pretty good understanding of political issues' and 'had contacted a government office' respectively had higher odds of registering to vote (by more than two times) relative to those who disagreed with the statement.

Regarding voter turnout, none of the demographic/socioeconomic variables was associated with raising/lowering the odds of voting in the CA recall election except for age and father's education. With the addition of the political items in Model 2, however, both age and father's education were no longer statistically significantly associated with the likelihood of having voted in the recall election. Among the political items that were associated with raising/lowering the likelihood of voting in the recall election were: 'The government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living,' 'everyone in this country has an opportunity to obtain an education,' and whether an individual 'belongs to any community organizations.' Thus, all else being equal, those agreeing with the statements – 'the government should support jobs and a good standard of living' and 'everyone has educational opportunity' – had lower odds of having voted in the recall election relative to those who did not, while those who 'belonged to a community organization' had higher odds of having voted in the recall election.

Reasons for Registering to Vote

It is clear from the patterns observed in the 2004 IIMMLA that all surveyed groups, including second-generation Koreans, had higher rates of voter registration than voter turnout. That voter registration is much higher than voter turnout is not surprising. Still, why were some second-generation Korean Americans interested in registering to vote while others were not? Although binary logistic regression analysis suggests the likelihood of registering to vote increased with age and with keeping abreast of political issues and contacting government (proactive initiatives), when asked about the reasons for registering to vote among second-generation Korean New Yorkers, reasons most often cited were civic duty, visibility, and minority representation. As Rhonda, a

twenty-five-year-old working for a major media company, put it, citizens had no right to complain about the state of political affairs if they did not participate in politics. She asserted:

> I believe in it philosophically as my responsibility to [vote]....People say you don't have a right to complain if you don't vote. It's such a privilege that we have earned in this society [yet] so many people don't have, to voice your opinion….But if you believe in the system at its purest level, you have to keep doing it, I think. Or I have to.

Visibility in politics and representation was also mentioned by a few as reasons for registering to vote. Hyun, a twenty-seven-year old woman working for a non-profit organization, echoed the sentiments of those who believed in their civic duties as citizens of a democratic nation. But she added that casting a vote was crucial for minority visibility in order to be taken seriously by the politicians. She noted, "The political process won't work unless everyone votes….It's not a democracy unless people exercise their rights. Otherwise you are giving over your power to everyone else….As minorities, it's even more important for you to go out instead of being a silent minority so at least be heard."

Some interviewees such as Sharon came to voter registration accidentally as her college campus was running a campaign to increase voter registration. She also alluded to differences in political views between her and her father as possible reasons for her engagement in politics. Here is how she, a thirty-three-year-old finance and strategy associate for a major financial firm, described the incident:

> Well the first time I registered on the campus at West Coast University [pseudonym] when you had to register because everybody would kill you if you weren't and at the time my dad is a staunch Republican and I think that was part of it. I thought, "Well, I'm not going to be what my father is. Sort of facetiously but I think I'm very much socially liberal. Maybe a little more conservative economically but I think that's the right place for me.

Reasons for Not Registering to Vote

Even though more than two-thirds and three-fourths of second-generation Korean New Yorkers and Korean Angelenos respectively were registered to

vote, a third to a quarter of them had failed to register to vote. Why was a considerable segment of the second-generation Korean population uninterested in registering to vote? When asked about the reasons for failing to register to vote, the responses from second-generation Korean New Yorkers ranged from general disinterest to disdain for politics and politicians to laziness on their part.[11] Describing himself as naturally apolitical, Alex, a twenty-four-year-old computer network administrator, expressed apathy toward politics, noting his belief that elected officials and their policy would have no direct impact upon him:

> Politics is always going to be politics and whoever you vote for is not going to affect my life that much. Probably not at all….I've never been very interested in politics. I think it would interest me if it affected me but I'm kind of a one direction kind of person. If I like something I'll concentrate on it very enthusiastically. If I have no interest in it, I won't even bother. Politics is something that you hear a lot about but then no matter how much I hear about it, I still don't care.

For other interviewees, a major reason for not registering to vote and avoiding politics in general was their view of politics and politicians as corrupt and filled with empty rhetoric (Kasinitz et al. 2008:285). As members of this group explained, not only were they disillusioned by the empty rhetoric of politicians corrupted by power and money, but also they felt that their vote had very little real impact. Arguing that power and money corrupted people and that no politician was exempt from it, Bill declared, "Politicians, it's all talk and no action once they get to their office….More money in their pockets."

Another common reason given for failing to register to vote was laziness. Although Joseph, a twenty-three-year-old working at his parents' grocery store, agreed in principle that registering to vote was a civic duty, he was skeptical that his vote could actually have an impact, and offered general laziness as a reason for avoiding the 1997 New York mayoral and the 1996 U.S. presidential elections. He responded, "Yeah, it's a civic duty but I'm too lazy to do it. I

11. The 2008 Current Population Survey (CPS) also reports that among the top reasons potential voters gave for not registering to vote were lack of interest (38.9%), followed by "other reason" (17.2%), and missed registration deadline (14%) (McDonald 2010).

still have that thing, 'Oh, what's one vote?'" Eunmee, a twenty-six-year-old woman working as an assistant director in film production, added that on top of laziness there was an additional reason for not registering to vote: jury duty (See Lien 2004 for similar responses from Chinese Americans). She admitted, "I do feel the importance of it. I'm just lazy. I'm bad. And then I'd be eligible for jury duty, which would be kind of interesting actually, but I never got myself down there to vote. I'll do it for the next presidential elections though."

Although the above responses suggest political apathy as a major factor in evading voter registration, a more significant reason for expressing disdain for politics and politicians among young people seems to be the shortage of attractive candidates running for office. Eunmee stated that none of the candidates in the 1996 presidential elections inspired her to register to vote. It became clear to her that she had very few viable candidates from which to choose. Utterly disappointed at the lack of alternatives that could have possibly drawn her to the political process, she explained, "At the time, I think it was Clinton. See that's....I didn't like both of them and that's why I didn't register. That's why I wouldn't want to vote for either of them. I would have...I didn't like Dole too much so I think he's too....I couldn't see Dole running our country." Rhonda's view resonated with the sentiments of Eunmee, and she articulated some of the problems that may keep young people away from politics, such as the lack of choices and hypocrisy among politicians. Rhonda said, "The problem is that lately you rarely find anyone out there who is saying what you want them to say or if they say what you want them to say, they're not doing what they say they're going to do, so you lose faith." While these responses have to be taken at face value, it becomes clear that what may be perceived as a general disinterest in electoral politics from young people may have more to do with the politicians' inability to connect with issues that affect them than mere ignorance and "laziness."

Finally, some took the position that citizens should not vote until they were well versed in the issues that the candidates stood for. As Eunmee put it, "Not really. [I] never got around to registering. Because if I had to vote, I'd have to read up on issues." She adds, laughing, "I'm lazy." Andrew articulated this view most forcefully by arguing that registering to vote and actually showing up to vote involved not only a commitment but also responsibility to learning the issues that each candidate championed. To cast a vote just for the sake of voting, he contended, was meaningless and actually dishonest. Andrew,

a thirty-year-old doctoral student in English at an Ivy League university in the Northeast, claimed that he had stayed away from voting until he had taken the time to learn about the candidates and the issues they endorsed; otherwise, he was not only being dishonest with himself but also being irresponsible. By not voting, he argued that he was being true to himself:

> Well, the last presidential election, that was the first time I voted. I didn't vote....that's when I registered, right before then. For a long time I disengaged myself from any sort of political activity at all and I still do except I vote occasionally but why did I register? I was largely influenced by my then-girlfriend who takes this stuff very seriously. She's not an activist of any sort but she takes the responsibility of being a citizen very seriously in terms of exercising your right to vote. Civic duty, yes. So I thought about that and I thought, Yeah, so why was I....I questioned why I had been so against voting because for a while I said "Why should you vote?" And I felt that you shouldn't vote not because you should be indifferent to political activity or because you thought it was just a bunch of crap but because I felt that in order for your vote to be of any real substance, apart from the fact that it's just a number that you're adding to a pool of other votes, I felt for that vote to really have any meaning you had to be really versed in what the issues were. What the candidates really were like. You had to know so much to cast a vote. I felt I didn't have that knowledge so I thought I was being more honest to myself to not vote.

These descriptions of second-generation Koreans' reasons for not registering to vote point to a general indifference of young people to politics as a major factor in their decision not to participate in electoral politics. However, this disdain for politicians and politics came not only from a general attitude of apathy towards politics, but was compounded by politicians' inability to connect to or attract the interest of young people. Thus, a negative view of politics and politicians, along with general inertia and greater expectations of voter awareness and preparedness, kept a segment of this group from registering to vote (and also from turning out to vote).

Party Affiliation

Political parties are among the institutions that play a pivotal role in the incorporation of newcomers into the political process (Freedman 2000; Ramakrishnan 2005; Jones-Correa 2005:77). The patterns of party affiliation for Korean Americans reveal that the Korean community has been increasingly shifting their alliances toward the Democratic party.[12] In the 1998 New York survey more than half (52.6%) of second-generation Korean New Yorkers were affiliated with the Democratic party, while 27.6% were registered with the Republican party and a fifth (19.8%) were registered as Independents. In the 2004 IIMMLA, there are two questions regarding party affiliation: political party with which they identify, and the party with which they are actually registered. While two-fifths (40.6%) of second-generation Korean Angelenos identified with the Democratic party, a rate slightly lower than those of Korean New Yorkers, the proportion registered as Democrats was actually lower (35.7%). The proportion of those registered as Republicans, by contrast, was slightly higher, with 38.5% registered as Republican while those identifying as Republican was 36.8%. Incidentally, the proportion of those identifying as Independents was 22.6% while those actually registered as Independents

12. The Korean community's Democratic turn is actually a relatively recent phenomenon since most first-generation Koreans tended to favor the Republican party because of their economic interests as small business owners (Chi 2005). For example, a survey carried out in 1992 by Gall and Gall (Chi 2005) found that Korean Americans were disproportionately affiliated with the Republican party compared to the Democratic party. Close to half (49.4%) were affiliated with the Republican party in 1992 compared to 30.4 percent that were associated with the Democratic party (Chi 2005). Following the onslaught of anti-immigrant proposals and actions from the Republican party in the 1990s, however, Korean immigrants have been increasingly shifting their affiliation to the Democratic party. In the 2000-2001 PNAAPS, twice as many Korean Americans were affiliated with the Democratic party vis-à-vis the Republican party. Similarly in the 2003 D.C. survey, 39.9% of Korean Americans favored the Democratic party while 23.3% preferred the Republic party and 35.1% did not favor either party. In the 2006 southern California survey 42.6% of Korean Americans favored the Democratic party compared to 29% that affiliated with the Republican party and 27% that chose to remain as Independents. During the historic 2008 presidential contest that elected Barack Obama to the U.S. presidency, an exit poll conducted by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) found that over half (51%) of Korean Americans were registered with the Democratic party while 20% were registered with the Republican party. Following the trend of Asian American affiliation as Independents, more than a quarter (28%) of Korean Americans was also registered as Independents.

was slightly higher – 25.8% (See Table 1 and Table 3). Comparisons with other second-generation immigrants in the 2004 IIMMLA reveal that Korean Angelenos had the lowest Democratic affiliation of all groups except for non-Hispanic whites; the reverse was also true where second-generation Koreans exhibited the highest rate of affiliation with the Republican party among all groups except for non-Hispanic whites.

These patterns of party affiliation indicate a strong Democratic identification among second-generation Koreans as well as their increasingly Democratic parents. Yet, second-generation Koreans in Los Angeles, while identifying as Democrats, showed a slight preference for registering with the Republican party, raising questions about preferences and actual behavior. What factors account for second-generation Koreans' preference for one political party over another? The 2006 southern California survey provides some clues as to the reasons why first-generation Koreans supported the respective political parties. According to that survey, a major reason why first-generation Koreans favored the Republican party was the Republican party's position on taxes and their stance toward North Korean nuclear issues; by contrast, a major reason for supporting the Democratic party was the party's stance toward immigration and welfare policies.[13] For second-generation Koreans, on the other hand, in the 2004 IIMMLA political ideology seems to be closely associated with party affiliation. For example, among conservatives, close to three-fourths (72.2%) of second-generation Korean Angelenos were registered with the Republican party while only 9.7% favored the Democratic party. Among liberals, a similar pattern prevailed, with 62.5% of them

13. In her survey of Asian American voters, Lien et al. (2004:123-124) found that liberal political ideology, level of interest and knowledge of political matters, sense of belonging to Asian American community, being employed, and being South Asian, Japanese, and Korean (relative to being Chinese which was the reference category) were associated with raising the odds for affiliating with the Democratic party (Lien et al. 2004). The variables associated with increasing the likelihood of affiliating with the Republican party, by contrast, were conservative political ideology, greater political knowledge, attendance of religious services, being employed, age or length in the United States, and being South Asian, Japanese, and Korean (relative to being Chinese which was the reference category) (124). Interestingly, Lien et al. (2004) did not find, after controls, an association between racial discrimination and the likelihood of affiliating with the Democratic party. Neither was higher socioeconomic status associated with the likelihood of affiliating with the Republican party (relative to no identification with a party).

registered with the Democratic party compared to 10.7% that were registered with the Republican party. Moderates, although they were less skewed in their distributions, were more likely to be registered with the Democratic party (37.2%) than the Republican party (25.6%).

To examine the reasons for affiliating with specific political parties among Korean New Yorkers, interviewees were asked about their party preferences and their reasons for selecting those parties. Generally respondents' position on social, economic, or political issues influenced their identification with a political party. Those who were fiscally and socially conservative tended to favor the Republican party while those who were socially liberal tended to be drawn to the Democratic party. In describing his reasons for affiliating with the Democratic party, Joseph's liberal views resonated with the platform espoused by the Democratic party. Yet, he admitted that he could become more conservative as he got older and thus, his party affiliation could shift in the near future. He said, "Democrat, because I think my values until recently have been very Democratic, somewhat liberal. But [in the future].... I'm going to be very conservative, I believe." Meanwhile, Heesoo brought up the experience of growing up poor as a factor in affiliating with the Democratic party although her parents had been Republicans. Heesoo, a thirty-four-year old woman working as a real estate developer, said, "It's because I grew up poor. My parents are Republicans. I didn't find that out till college. I was shocked." By contrast, Dongchul, a thirty-three-year-old man working as an investment banker, joined the Republican party because his wife was registered with the Republican party and also because he found them to be pro-business.

As described earlier regarding the tendency of Korean and Asian Americans not to affiliate with a political party, several also chose to be independents because they were often unsure of their party preferences (Aoki and Takeda 2008; Hajnal and Lee 2006). According to Sarah, a twenty-six-year-old working in the HMO industry, her reason for not affiliating with the Democratic party, although she tended to lean Democratic ideologically, was because she could not identify with a political party. She also mentioned that she had no interest in politics although she did cast a vote in the 1996 presidential elections. By contrast, even though Jonathan was drawn to the Republican party because of his conservatism, he, nonetheless, maintained an independent party affiliation. According to Jonathan, a twenty-seven-year-old associate consultant for an accounting firm, he was less interested in affiliating

with a political party than choosing the right candidates whose values were in line with his. If a Democratic candidate upheld conservative values, he was willing to vote for that candidate. Therefore, there was no guarantee that he would cast votes along party lines, i.e. the Republican Party, unless the candidate expressed conservative values.

The patterns of second-generation Korean party affiliation fall in line with the factors outlined from past research such as political ideology, socioeconomic status, and class interests. Yet, the narratives also suggest that party preferences and affiliation are not fixed and can change over the individuals' life course. Although both generations of Korean Americans exhibit a preference for the Democratic party, second-generation Korean Angelenos, much more so than Korean New Yorkers, are increasingly registering with the Republican party. This may be the result of the particularities of the Los Angeles sample, but other factors such as religiosity and upbringing may also shape the political ideology and party preferences of second-generation Koreans.

Support for Co-Ethnic Candidates

Research has found that Asian Americans are more likely to donate, register to vote, and actually turn out to vote when an Asian American candidate is running for office (Aoki and Takeda 2008; Chi 2005; Fong 2002; Lai et al. 2001; Lien, Conway, Wong 2004). Much of Asian American lack of interest or political apathy may have more to do with candidates that do not represent or stand for issues that affect Asian American communities rather than "passive" cultural dispositions. Both Lien et al.'s (2004) and the 2006 California surveys lend support to a preference for co-ethnic candidates among Asian and Korean American voters. For example, nearly one-half (45.7%) of Korean Americans in the 2006 California survey responded that they would unconditionally support a co-ethnic candidate running for public office while 40.3% would take the candidate's policies and party affiliation into account.

I also inquired about the need for co-ethnic candidates to the 1998 New York interviewees. Second-generation Korean New Yorkers were divided between those who favored co-ethnic political representation and those who deemed it unnecessary. Those in support of co-ethnic or Asian American representation rallied behind Korean or Asian American politicians because

of their potential for increased community visibility and representation. To put it another way, Korean and Asian American candidates were seen as more likely to represent issues that affected the Korean and Asian American communities because of ethnic or pan-ethnic solidarity. For instance, Tammy, a twenty-seven-year-old working in higher education, argued that Korean or Asian American candidates were more sensitive to Korean or Asian American issues than non-Asian American politicians. For her, non-Asian American elected officials were less likely to be aware and more likely to hold simplistic views of the community whereas co-ethnic politicians would have a nuanced understanding of the Korean community. Tammy observed, "Mainly because I think that there are probably as more and more Asians immigrate, there are bound to be more complicated issues that are not going to be addressed by people who are not aware of the Asian community at all and some of the more pressing issues that we deal with, whether it's immigration or small business owners or just the fact that many Asians are not involved politically and are not vocal in what they want."

Another argument for co-ethnic representation was that elected co-ethnic officials would raise the visibility of the community in the political process and more importantly, serve as role models for the younger generation (Aoki and Takeda 2008). Given that there is little Korean American representation in the political process, it was important to achieve co-ethnic representation in order to provide a voice for the immigrant community. Joseph replied, "We can't just be a minority and another group. We want to have our voices heard." Especially in light of negative media depictions of Asian Americans, including the controversy over the bribery scandals surrounding the campaign contributions for the former president Bill Clinton, Joseph's call for co-ethnic representation was a desire to break the perception of Asian Americans as "deceitful" by having an honest Korean American politician. He said, "I want to break the stereotype of the Korean politicians and the bribe taking in that sense. An honest person who can change and make a mark, that's what I'm looking towards."

A few also advocated co-ethnic representation as a means of community empowerment. Jinsoo, a thirty-year-old police officer, contended that political representation is especially critical in times of political turmoil. For example, he observed that the mayor as well as New York City government officials generally overlook Korean Americans because Koreans were viewed as a non-

voting bloc. Even though he himself did not vote in the general elections, he still regarded voting as an important medium for getting the attention of the politicians. Angela, on the other hand, argued that the history of the United States was filled with examples of minority exclusion from the political process. In light of this history and its consequences for minority communities, Angela, a thirty-three-year-old working as a freelancer in computer graphics, declared, "I think it's very important for Koreans to be represented because there's a long history of nonrepresentation of minorities in this country. Mexicans and Chinese. They didn't have Congress people to represent them for the longest time." Angela added further that without political power, minority groups were akin to being treated as colonial subjects without rights rather than as citizens with full rights:

> Absolutely. That's part of being in a representative democracy, which we are and that is one of the cornerstones of this country and I think it's extremely important. That is the means to really alleviate the stuff that's going on. I don't know if you know about Chinatown but they've been here for a long time and they didn't have any political power. They used to gerrymander it, change the district so they couldn't vote as a block. And they did that with Mexican Americans in California so if you don't have a voice you're always going to be a small colony within America, which you don't have to be. And that's essentially what happened with a lot of minorities. So I think it's very important.

Although support and calls for greater co-ethnic political representation were voiced among second-generation Koreans, not everyone, however, saw co-ethnic representation as necessary. To this segment of the 1.5 and second-generation population, the race or ethnicity of the elected official was less important than their politics, and what really mattered was whether politicians could effectively represent the interests of the Korean community. From this perspective then, politics or substantive representation should define the agenda of the politicians and not their race or ethnicity. A major reason for expressing such views was that this segment saw being Korean American as no longer posing significant problems or difficulties compared to being a Black American. In other words, according to this view, because Korean or Asian Americans were not as prone to racial discrimination as Black Americans, it was unnecessary for them to seek co-ethnic political representation. In

this group's view, co-ethnic representation of Black Americans was justified because they were still the most economically disadvantaged group in America. However, as far as the Korean community was concerned, it was not expedient that they seek co-ethnic political representation because they were less affected by racial discrimination. As Rhonda put it:

> I have to say that….I've never lived in a community where I felt that Asians were so persecuted in this country, so it has not been a huge priority for me, in terms of how much the government is spending on this and whether there should be representatives in local government who are reflecting this perspective. I think it is a good idea any time to have representatives of all of our people but I've never felt a strong inclination to pull up my bootstraps and fight for the rights of Koreans because I never felt like it's been so threatened. I'm much more concerned with the rights of Black people, and much more concerned with the rights of people that fall within the lowest tax brackets and poverty levels.

In many ways, these 1.5 and second-generation responses toward co-ethnic representation follow the position found in mainstream media and scholarly circles, which contend that Korean or Asian Americans are less in need for co-ethnic representation because they encounter less discrimination than Black Americans. This liberal view of politics assumes that one's race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality should not define one's politics, and for these young adults with limited personal experiences of discrimination growing up, they find that co-ethnic political power is unnecessary. Yet, recognizing the contradictions between liberal ideology and its practice, Andrew conceded that it was more realistic to assume that co-ethnic politicians would pay greater attention to and sensitivity toward the Korean community than non-Korean (or non-Asian) politicians. Nonetheless, he did not preclude the possibility that non-Korean politicians would also place as much interest in Korean or Asian American issues as co-ethnic politicians:

> Ideally you would like to say that representation should be assumed by anybody who's qualified to assume that representation. But practically, I think it would be naive not to say that a Korean politician would have more immediate interest in the Korean community, so I'm divided on that. I think it's possible for a non-Korean or a non-Asian to take interest

> in Asian issues but would it be more to our benefit if we had an Asian representation? Yes.

Clearly these discussions of co-ethnic political representation point to a recognition of political invisibility and the need for better representation from a segment of second-generation Koreans. But another segment of this population is in line with those views held in the mainstream – that what matters is not the ethnicity of the politician but their politics. Thus, co-ethnic candidates cannot automatically assume unanimous support from second-generation Korean voters as they will also consider these candidates' positions on various social and economic issues.

Conclusion and Discussion

This paper examined the attitudes and behavior of 1.5 and second-generation Korean Americans toward key aspects of electoral politics – naturalization, voter registration and turnout, and party affiliation. While foreign-birth and low rates of naturalization constitute major stumbling blocks for voter eligibility for first-generation Koreans, the high rates of naturalization among 1.5-generation Koreans promise greater potential for joining the electorate and exercising their voting rights. Yet, although American upbringing and schooling is speeding up second-generation socialization into mainstream norms of civic engagement and bringing the next generation closer to mainstream political institutions in their attitudes and behavior, there is also an ambivalence, apathy, and even disdain toward politicians and politics that is common to many young people today. Interestingly, this political indifference often linked to the youth stems, in the view of second-generation Koreans, more from a shortage of politicians who are responsive to their concerns than general apathy, cautioning against simplistic views of passivity among the younger generation.

The binary logistic regression analyses of voter registration and turnout in the 2004 IIMMLA suggest that net of other factors, older and proactive (good understanding of political issues and having contacted government) second-generation Koreans had higher odds of registering to vote relative to those who did not; however, membership in an organization raised the odds of turning out to vote (CA recall election). Interestingly, attending political meetings,

rallies, or taking part in protests, which certainly constitute forms of political participation and increase turnout (de la Garza 2004), were not associated with the likelihood of registering to vote, or voting in the recall election. Neither was socioeconomic status associated with voter registration and turnout for second-generation Koreans, cautioning against relying on standard models of political participation to understand the politics of second-generation Korean and Asian Americans.

When it comes to second-generation preferences for political parties, the Korean community, including both first- and second-generation Koreans, has been heavily shifting its alliances toward the Democratic party since the past decade. The gap in party affiliation that existed between the first and second generations has been rapidly disappearing, as the first and second generations have been increasingly joining the Democratic party. Still, the overwhelming preference for the Democratic party that was observed among Korean New Yorkers seems to be receding for Korean Angelenos, as slightly higher proportion of them were registering with the Republican party. In fact, of all groups except for non-Hispanic whites, Korean Americans were the least affiliated with the Democratic (and vice-versa most affiliated with the Republican) party in the Los Angeles area. Whether this is due to regional influences (political climate of Los Angeles) or group characteristics, such as socialization from immigrant parents as well as higher levels of religiosity and church attendance among Korean Americans, requires further analysis based on future research.

Also, while the survey and in-depth interview data used to examine the politics of second-generation Koreans provide important clues to second-generation understanding and framing of the political process, there are a number of limitations with the data used. Among other things, although second-generation voter information from the 2004 IIMMLA is somewhat current, the New York survey and in-depth interview data are dated and limited in sample size. Clearly, more recent interview data is needed to assess how current second-generation cohorts view and talk about politics in the aftermath of the historic 2008 presidential election.

Finally, greater attention needs to be paid to the politics of both the immigrant and second generations as well as explanations of how second-generation Koreans come together under the banner of ethnic or pan-ethnic political identities. A recent development that is raising the political hopes

and aspirations of Korean and Asian Americans is the attempt by the second generation to break into local, state, and national politics, including contests for several seats in the city council in California as well as mayoral contests in major metropolitan areas on the East Coast. For example, in New York, John Liu, a 1.5-generation Taiwanese American, has served as city council member representing Flushing, NY and recently got elected as the city comptroller (Aoki and Takeda 2008; Kasinitz et al. 2008:279). A number of Asian Americans in recent years have also been elected to Congress and governorships of various states as well as getting appointed to positions in the current and previous administrations (Saito 2009). This certainly represents a positive departure from the past where Asian Americans were politically disenfranchised.

Yet, these gains have to be weighed against ongoing institutional barriers in the political process as well as the particularities of Korean and Asian American voters such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, acculturation, political socialization, and religiosity, as these influence the political engagement of this group (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Ramakrishnan 2005). In fact, when it comes to choosing a political party, a significant proportion of Korean Americans maintain an independent party affiliation (Hajnal and Lee 2006); even those that may be registered with a particular political party tend to not vote along party lines. These divergences in political orientation suggest that we need to not only consider the conventional determinants of second-generation political attitudes and behavior, but also examine the reasons behind those attitudes and behavior. Doing so permits us to gain greater appreciation for and understanding of their politics, as they will constitute an important presence in local and national politics in the future.

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Dae Young Kim (dkio@gmu.edu) is an assistant professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at George Mason University. He is the author of several articles and book chapters on 1.5 and second-generation Korean Americans. Several of his papers addressing the integration of children of Korean immigrants have appeared in the *Sociology of Religion*, the *International Migration Review*, and the *Sociological Forum*. He is currently completing a book-length monograph addressing the processes of acculturation and racialization among second-generation Korean Americans in New York.

Appendix A:

Table 4. Odds Ratio from the Logistic Regression Contrasting the Likelihood of Registering to Vote versus Not and Voting in CA Recall Election Versus Not

Variable	Whether Registered to Vote		Whether Voted on CA Recall Election	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Demographic characteristics				
Education (Reference category-Some college or less)				
BA or higher	1.194 (.350)	1.156 (.360)	.862 (.383)	.867 (.422)
Marital status (Reference category – Single, never married)				
Married	.869 (.484)	.636 (.505)	.737 (.423)	.914 (.481)
Sex (Reference category – female)				
Male	1.214 (.304)	1.118 (.323)	.991 (.305)	.875 (.331)
Age	1.123** (.044)	1.116** (.045)	1.102*** (.038)	1.071 (.041)
Father's education (Reference category – Some college or less)				
BA or higher	1.187 (.311)	1.108 (.332)	1.870** (.317)	1.717 (.358)
Political battery questions				
Interest in parents' country politics (Reference category – Disagree)				
Agree		.623 (.357)		.867 (.352)
Elected officials don't care (Reference category – Disagree				
Agree		.488** (.333)		1.008 (.330)
The government should support jobs and a good standard of living (Reference category – Disagree)				
Agree		2.024 (.374)		.428** (.411)
Everyone has educational opportunity (Reference category – Disagree)				
Agree		1.085 (.478)		.264** (.542)
Pretty good understanding of the important political issues (Reference category – Disagree)				
Agree		2.591** (.483)		1.435 (.691)

Variable	Whether Registered to Vote		Whether Voted on CA Recall Election	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Whether belongs to organization (Reference category – Disagree)				
Agree		1.297 (.485)		1.806** (.424)
Whether has contacted government (Reference category – Disagree)				
Agree		2.452** (.393)		2.611 (.347)
Whether attended political meetings (Reference category – Disagree)				
Agree		1.455 (.705)		1.260 (.667)
Whether taken part in protest (Reference category – Disagree)				
Agree		2.207 (.719)		.970 (.516)
Number of observations (Degrees of freedom)	287 (5)	287 (9)	199 (5)	199 (9)
Log likelihood	277.372	257.229	260.711	234.446
Adjusted R square (Cox&Snell)	0.066	.129	.071	.186

*** p<0.01; ** p<0.05.

Notes: Standard errors are stated in brackets.

Exact wording of the political battery questions:

1. I am interested in the politics of my parents' or grandparents' home country.
2. Most elected officials don't care what people like me think.
3. The government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living.
4. Everyone in this country has an opportunity to obtain an education corresponding to his or her abilities or talents.
5. I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.
6. Whether belongs to any community organizations, work-related organizations, sports teams, or other non-religious organizations.
7. In the past twelve months, have you contacted a government office about a problem or to get help or information either by telephone, e-mail or in person?
8. In the past twelve months, have you attended any political meetings, rallies, speeches or dinners in support of a political candidate?
9. In the past twelve months, have you taken part in any form of protest, such as picketing, a march, demonstration or boycott?

Abstract

This paper discusses the political engagement of second-generation Korean Americans in formal politics, including naturalization, voter registration and turnout, and party affiliation. Drawing from the results of in-depth follow-up interviews conducted with a subsample of second-generation Korean Americans who were randomly chosen to participate in the 1998 New York Second-Generation Survey, the paper describes the views, in their own words, of second-generation Korean Americans toward politics, particularly their reasons for participating in electoral politics. Also included are their views on becoming naturalized, registering to vote, and endorsing a particular political party and candidate. The results illustrate a degree of complexity and nuance to conventional discussions of determinants of political behavior among Korean and Asian Americans. In addition, the results provide insights into the politics of second-generation Koreans who are gaining greater visibility and presence in national and local politics.

Keywords: second-generation Korean Americans, naturalization, voter registration and turnout, party affiliation, co-ethnic candidates

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