

# **The Intergenerational Gap in Korean-Americans' Attitudes toward Unification of Korea**

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To provide a better picture of Korean-American attitudes toward the unification of the two Koreas in this essay, I have employed a more definitive assessment of the generation gap in Korean-Americans' attitudes toward Korean unification issues. By using a regression analysis of survey data, this study reports and explores the intergenerational gap in perceptions of Korean unification among Korean-Americans. In operational terms, I seek to understand the generation gap by employing a multi-regression analysis of Korean-American postures on various issues concerning Korean unification. A regression analysis permits analysis of age groups without the need for panel data. It is proposed that intergenerational contrasts emerge on a number of Korean unification issues. I assume that the younger Korean-American generation tends to hold different views from those of their elders about the two Koreas and their unification. The purposes of this study are: (1) to identify socioeconomic characteristics of the younger Korean-American age groups by comparing their responses on various social values to those of their elders, (2) to develop and to test some hypotheses concerning plausible impacts that this intergenerational population replacement in the Korean-American community has on its members' postures toward the unification of their motherland, and (3) to present major findings and suggest some policy implications.

## **Data and Method of Analysis**

Throughout this study, I assume that the intergenerational population replacement in the Korean-American community influences Korean-American attitudes toward Korean unification. Looking at the views of Korean-Americans and examining possible differences between the older and younger generations, I am relying primarily on a public opinion survey directed by the authors with Dr. Ilpyong J. Kim during the period between October 20 and November 5, 1995, with the sponsorship of the National Unification Board, Republic of Korea.

The respondents on this survey were randomly selected: 1,042 Korean-Americans who have U.S. citizenship or green cards (U.S. residents), and who are more than fifteen years old. The personal interview was generally used, but self-administration was permitted upon a respondent's request. The respondents are drawn from a national-level sample by the probability sampling procedure with regional quotas in fifteen United States cities known to have high rates of Korean-American residence. Of the participants, 250 (23 percent) were from the Northeastern region and 458 (44 percent) were from the Western region, excluding Hawaii. The remainder of the respondents (32 percent) were from the Midwestern region or the South. [See Table 1\*]

In this survey, the Korean-American respondents were asked various questions concerning Korean unification corresponding to our research questions, which included measures of some dimensions of Korean-American beliefs about unification. Appropriate questions were selected to represent different Korean unification belief components.

The analysis of the intergenerational differences in Korean-American attitudes toward Korean unification proceeds in four stages. First, I define dimensions and develop measures of age groups for the Korean-American respondents in this survey. As discussed above, I draw on some socioeconomic characteristics of the younger Korean-American generation by addressing the impact of intergenerational population replacement on the Korean-American community. Based on this discussion, I provide some theoretical propositions on the generation gap in Korean-American attitudes toward the Korean unification. Second, I construct several different measures standing for Korean-American attitudes toward Korean unification. I divide Korean-Americans' general beliefs about Korean unification observed in the survey into the following three components: their overall views about unification, their preferred process of unifying the two Koreas, and their knowledge and approval of unification policies formulated by the North and South Korean governments. Each unification belief is composed of several specific measures. Based upon these respective measures, I formulate the hypotheses to be tested. Third, I explore the differences in postures on Korean unification issues between the younger age groups and the older age groups. In particular, the third step is intended to examine how respondents in various age groups

**Tables referred to in this article appear on pp. 171-178.**

subcultures of generations may exist. It is evident that there has been a remarkable increase in the growth of the younger generation of Korean immigrants. For Korean-Americans, the problems of population replacement between the younger Korean-American generation and the older Korean-American generation are no longer produced simply by the passage of time, but by a sum of changes which impose singularity on a generation according to its social values and political behavior.

Among many Korean-American analysts and journalists, there is a consensus that the younger Korean-American generation can be subdivided into two groups, commonly represented by the terms "one-point-five generation Korean-Americans" and "second generation Korean-Americans." The so-called "one-point-five generation" are mostly those born in South Korea and who have experienced South Korean political changes and economic growth. Most of them came to the United States in their early teens. It was this generation that experienced the student protest movement in South Korea in the 1980s. By contrast, so-called "second generation" Korean-Americans were mostly born in the United States or immigrated at an early age. It is a natural guess that their coming of age in the United States might lead to identity problems. In particular, the paradoxical coincidence of adopted Western individualization and the Confucian orientation received from their parents is reflected in their political and social attitudes. Since there are no existing survey data drawing on attitudes of "one-point-five" and "second generation" Korean-Americans, the present study considers age groups of Korean-American respondents as an alternative to political generations. Thus, the term "younger age groups" mostly refers to Korean-Americans in the "one-point-five generation" or "second generation."

Several factors underlie the widespread political and social interest of this remarkable intergenerational population replacement in the Korean-American community. As the community grows older and becomes involved in life in the United States, younger Korean-Americans are coming to possess more Western or American values than their elder counterparts. The social and economic attitudes held by younger Korean-Americans are associated with the forces molding the Korean immigrant community, focusing on values of individualism at the cost of their parents' traditional views. At home, they are taught by their parents to respect Confucian values, but they learn from their teachers at school and from American society in general the norms derived from the drastic social changes in the United States. It is

natural that these young Korean-Americans have two sets of social values and thus identity problems. It is empirically found, for instance, that the majority of Korean-American students have dual sets of values. They appear to be well adjusted to life in the United States, and seem happy with their schools, family life, and friends, on the one hand, but quite a few students seem also to be worried about social life and learning difficulties, on the other hand.<sup>3</sup>

Table 2 describes the specific measurements demonstrating intergenerational differences in socioeconomic experiences and behavior of the Korean-American respondents. In the survey employed in this study, 1,012 of 1,042 participants indicated their respective ages. I am interested in the differences in socioeconomic characteristics between the younger and older generations of Korean-Americans that are most likely to stimulate their socioeconomic attitudes and policy preferences concerning Korean unification. To this end, I divide the Korean-American respondents into six age groups.

Regarding the impact of the intergenerational population replacement in the Korean-American community on Korean-Americans' sociopolitical attitudes, in the survey data employed in this study, major findings are summarized as follows:

***Finding 1:*** Younger Korean-Americans have more and more Western or American values than their elder counterparts. The 1995 survey shows that as the number of Korean-Americans born in the United States increases with time, they feel English to be their primary language, and sometimes their bilingual ability surpasses that of their elders.

***Finding 2:*** Young Korean-Americans' experiences with political stability and economic prosperity lead to greater commitment to individualistic values of self-realization than to physical security and economic interests. I found that people in the young age groups participate more vigorously in various associational activities than do people in the older age groups. I assume that young Korean-Americans' energy and vigorous democratic participation stem from their adeptness in forming voluntary associations and participating in Korean community activities.

***Finding 3:*** Even if education historically has been an attractive value among Korean-Americans, younger Korean-Americans' clear emphasis on education is closely associated with their commitment to both their own ambitions and their own hard

work. In particular, the younger Korean-American generation was the first to experience the massive expansion of systemic educational programs influenced by the United States. Likewise, the survey data employed in this study show that even if there is no lack of support for education across any group lines among Korean-Americans, education is found to be an important indicator of intergenerational change among Korean-Americans. It is inevitable that the higher education levels achieved by young Korean-Americans leads to significant value change.

These findings (F1, F2, and F3) have important implications for exploring the generation gap among Korean-Americans in attitudes toward Korean unification, in that the sociopolitical values of the younger generation could raise potential discord over unification issues. Sociopolitical variations among Korean-Americans could lead to a breakup of the far-reaching consensus among the members of the Korean-American society. Subsequently, intergenerational differences will undoubtedly play a key role in setting the tone of Korean-American perceptions of the two Koreas and their unification. Considering the fact that those who have consistent democratic belief systems are much more politically active, the beliefs of the young and the better-educated among Korean-Americans have important implications for their behavior and their posture toward Korean unification issues. Based upon these preliminary findings, I need to provide specific questions to be explored concerning how Korean-Americans in younger age groups differ from their older counterparts, as follows.

*Question 1:* How do beliefs of younger Korean-Americans about Korean unification issues differ from those of older Korean-Americans? I need to examine whether Korean-Americans in the younger groups with looser Korea connections have less interest in and less optimism about Korean unification than their elder counterparts. In particular, I test hypotheses on Korean-Americans' overall projections of Korean unification and its outcomes.

*Question 2:* If younger Korean-Americans have more democratic and liberal values than older Korean-Americans, do those in the young age groups, more than those in the older age groups, support liberal and peaceful procedures to unify Korea over

pragmatic and drastic procedures?

**Question 3:** Considering the accessibility of information for younger Korean-Americans and their higher levels of education, how much do the younger birth groups know about the North and South Korean governments' unification policies, and do they support them? I test a hypothesis that young Korean-Americans are more likely than their elders to have knowledge of the unification formulas developed by the two Korean governments, and to approve or disapprove of those unification policies.

Generally speaking, specific beliefs Korean-Americans hold about Korean unification issues delineate the international behavior of the two Koreas over the comparatively long term and confine bilateral relationship of the two Koreas. The present study therefore postulates that Korean-American unification beliefs may be operationalized and discussed based on the three continua developed above: the projection of the Korean unification, the preferred process of unifying the two Koreas, and the knowledge and assessment of the two Korean governments' policy.

### **Korean-Americans' Beliefs about Korean Unification**

In the following section, I briefly address the conceptual definition and empirical measures of Korean-American beliefs about Korean unification issues employed in the 1995 survey. The empirical scales presented here represent an emphasis that is slightly different from the original conceptual definition intended in the survey. It is possible that the measures employed in this study to examine the generation gap in Korean-American unification beliefs do not accurately tap into the empirical concepts for suggested propositions. However, this study does not consider systematic coding biases that the data produce. The empirical scales for all measures have been re-coded differently from those originally measured in order to make them appropriate to this study without any changes in meanings intended in the original conceptual and operational definitions. They have been re-coded so that mean scores of all age groups range from minus-1 to plus-1, with a hypothetical midpoint at zero. Then I formulate particular hypotheses to be tested based upon both measures of Korean-American beliefs about Korean unification. Measures and specific question wordings drawn from the 1995 survey are also put together and given in the appendix of this paper. I have taken the "No Response

rate" and the "Don't Know rate" as missing data, and thus do not consider them.

#### *Measures of Projections about Korean Unification*

Korean-Americans' projections about Korean unification undoubtedly play a key role in setting the tone of their attitudes toward reunification. These measures deal with the question of Korean-Americans' overall postures on Korean unification issues. Measures of overall projections incorporate questions regarding Korean-Americans' hopes for unification, their expectations of the timing of unification, and the outcomes of unification for them.

The hypothesis is that the Korean-Americans in the younger age groups think about Korean unification issues more optimistically and functionally than the Korean-Americans in the older age groups. More specifically, younger Korean-Americans, more than their elder counterparts, are expected to think of Korean unification as definitely necessary, to see Korean unification as a question of economic integrity over political or institutional integrity, and to expect the unification to happen in the near future. Based on the suggested hypotheses, all plus (+) signs of regression coefficients (*B*'s) indicate the Korean-Americans' optimistic and functional views of unification over realistic views. By contrast, all minus (-) signs indicate the Korean-Americans' pessimistic views toward unification and their understanding of unifying Korea in terms of achieving political and institutional unity.

#### *Measures of Preferred Process of Unification*

A key element of Korean-Americans' unification beliefs is related to their preferences of specific means of unifying Korea. In 1990, South Koreans watched emotionally as West Germany absorbed East Germany, thinking that perhaps the two Koreas would also be soon unified. Initially, many Korean-Americans wanted to believe that the Korean case was similar to that of Germany and that South Korea could somehow absorb North Korea. Among many Korean-Americans, it was thought likely that a German-type scenario would take place and that South Korea would quickly and suddenly absorb North Korea. However, I hypothesize that the Korean-Americans in the younger age groups are more likely than their elder counterparts to favor a gradual and peaceful unification process over a more abrupt or violent means. Likewise, I hypothesize that, based on their more liberal values, Korean-Americans in the younger age groups would place priority on non-political cooperation between the two Koreas in resolving conflict.

In 1991, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved the membership of North and South Korea, and they were finally admitted into the United Nations together, leading to a new chapter in inter-Korean relations based on peaceful coexistence and co-prosperity. As members of the United Nations, the two Koreas should settle their disputes by peaceful means without resort to violence. I here test another hypothesis, that young Korean-Americans support the separate but simultaneous entry of the two Koreas into the United Nations and also support unification policies based North Korea's social stability and its socialist system's making peaceful changes. These hypotheses lead to the suggestion that the younger Korean-Americans will support the South Korean government's decision to provide rice and financial aid to North Korea. Measures of the preferred unification process include questions regarding Korean-Americans' preferred means of unification, their approval of gradual and peaceful unification procedures, and their support of South Korean aid to North Korea. Based on the suggested propositions, all plus signs (+) of regression coefficients ( $B'$ s) indicate Korean-Americans' support of gradual and peaceful unification processes and their support of South Korean aid to North Korea. By contrast, all minus (-) signs show Korean-Americans' support of political unification over socioeconomic unification and their disapproval of South Korean aid to North Korea.

#### *Measures of Policy Knowledge and Policy Assessment*

Measures of Korean-Americans' policy knowledge include questions regarding the South Korean government's Korean National Community Unification Formula, and the Korean Federal System Formula, North Korea's unification plan. South Korea's Korean National Community Unification Formula is designed to achieve the reunification of the peninsula on the principles of independence in keeping with a spirit of self-determination, peace without the use of military force, and a democracy conducive to "grand national unity." By contrast, North Korea's confederation idea is "a Soviet-type central-local political arrangement such as the erstwhile union of autonomous republics." A research question in this study asks how aware Korean-Americans appear to be regarding the differences in the unification formulas of the two Korean governments. I focus on the generation gap in knowledge of these two formulas. Considering that those in the younger age groups in the Korean-American community hold higher education levels and maintain vigorous social participation, I hypothesize that younger Korean-Americans will have more knowledge of the two Korean governments' unification formulas than



older Korean-Americans. Based on the suggested propositions, all plus (+) signs of regression coefficients (*B*'s), as re-coded for each regression model, indicate greater knowledge of Korean governments' unification formulas. All minus (-) signs indicate the Korean-Americans' ignorance of these formulas.

Another research question concerns Korean-Americans' evaluations of the two Korean governments' efforts toward reunification. I do not address how many Korean-American respondents in the 1995 survey indicated their realization that there have been differences between the two Korean government unification formulas, but I discuss indirectly which age groups of Korean-American respondents support the unification policy of either South Korea or North Korea. I hypothesize that Korean-Americans in the younger age groups are more likely than those in the older age groups to approve of the South Korean government's unification policies, and that they are less likely to approve of the North Korean government's unification policies. I re-code response option scores so that all plus (+) signs indicate Korean-Americans' favorable assessments of efforts the two Korean governments are making.

### **Findings**

The main question of this study deals with whether or not age, after controlling for the other independent variables, has a significant effect on Korean-Americans' attitudes toward Korean reunification. For each regression model, I employ as independent variables "respondent's age," "bilingual ability," "place of birth," "educational attainment," "gender," "social participation," and "duration of residence in the United States." I examine regression coefficients of the "respondent's age" variable, which covaries along with other independent variables.

Table 3 is a tabulation of Korean-Americans' overall projections about Korean unification, broken down by various independent variables. I found that Korean-Americans are most likely to consider the unification of their country to be definitely necessary, but according to an appropriate pace. As a whole, they recognize the necessity of the unification on the one hand, but they do not think they need to be in a hurry. However, as shown in the second row of this table under "Necessity of Unification," the regression coefficient (0.13; with *t* value of 4.89) is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This clearly shows a generation gap in Korean-Americans' overall assessment of the Korean unification question. Compared to Korean-

Americans of the older generation, those in their teens and twenties tend to have passive attitudes on the indispensability of Korean reunification. Young Korean-Americans are less likely than those in the older age groups to regard the reunification of two Koreas as essential at this moment. By contrast, older Korean-Americans strongly believe, or take it for granted, that Korea should be unified as soon as possible. The relatively high  $t$  value (4.89) shows a close relationship between the degree of intensity of the desire for reunification and the respondent's age. It is interesting that after controlling for the "age" variable the coefficients of the "bilingual ability," "place of birth," and "gender" variables are all statistically significant. This finding indicates that Korean-Americans with bilingual ability, born in the United States, and women are likely to have passive views on the indispensability of the Korean reunification. This finding also corresponds to another, that expected timing of Korean unification is associated with respondents' ages. As shown in the third row of table 3, "Expected Time of Unification," Korean-Americans in the young age groups are shown to expect the reunification of Korea to be accomplished over the comparatively long term. Substantively speaking, it is evident that young Korean-Americans are less likely than their elders to view Korean reunification as necessary and inevitable.

Regarding the significance of unification, I hypothesized earlier in this study that the younger Korean-Americans are more likely than their elder counterparts to see Korean unification as a process to achieve economic integrity over political or institutional integrity. However, I cannot prove that this hypothesis is not to be rejected. When asked why Korea should be unified, the majority of Korean-American respondents indicated political reasons over economic reasons. As all regression coefficients in the fourth row, "Significance of Unification," are statistically insignificant, most Korean-Americans appear to think that Koreas should be unified because they must have a unitary political system, not because they must have a unitary economic system. The low  $t$  value (-0.62) shows no difference between Korean-American respondents' age groups. However, it is still noteworthy that Korean-Americans in the 16-to-19 age group see the significance of unification to be more economic than political or ideological. Even though not discussed in this essay, the mean value for this group (-0.01) is found to be considerably distant from the total mean value (-0.24) and from any other age groups' mean values.

Taken together, it is surprising to find that younger Korean-Americans regard Korean unification issues less optimistically than their elder counterparts in terms of necessity and the expected timing of unification. More specifically, I found that younger Korean-Americans are less likely than older Korean-Americans to believe that Korean unification is definitely necessary and to be expected in the near future. In addition, I found that they tend to see Korean unification as desirable to achieve political or institutional integrity over economic integrity. I also found that, even if this belief is evenly distributed across various age groups among Korean-Americans, young Korean-Americans in the 16-to-19 age group take an exceptionally pragmatic view.

Questions about the preferred process for Korean unification undoubtedly play a key role in settling the debate over Korean-American perceptions of the two Koreas and their unification. Table 4 indicates some fundamental similarities and differences in views between younger and elder Korean-Americans on issues of great importance in measuring Korean-Americans' preferred process of Korean unification. I divide measures of preferred unification process into three categories. The first category is composed of two measures of Korean-Americans' preferred ways to unification, the second is of two measures of their attitudes toward the peaceful coexistence of the Koreas, and the third is of two measures of Korean-Americans' support of South Korea's aid to North Korea. [See Table 4]

The breakdown of the first two measures by seven regression coefficients clearly shows the generation gap in Korean-Americans' preferred ways to unification. I hypothesized earlier in this study that the Korean-Americans in the younger age groups would be more likely than their elder counterparts to favor a gradual and peaceful unification over a more drastic scenario. The striking result is that younger Korean-Americans, more than their elder counterparts, tend to favor abrupt processes to achieve political integrity or South Korea's absorbing North Korea, rather than a gradual process such as achieving economic integrity. This is not to say that most Korean-Americans prefer a drastic process; it is evident that the majority of Korean-American respondents in the 1995 survey think it desirable for the two Koreas to achieve cooperation first in economics and culture. However, I found that the low mean scores of the 16-to-19 and 20-to-29 age groups contrast with the mean scores of the older age groups. Moreover, the regression coefficient (0.08) of the "age" variable is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. I also found that the

regression coefficient (-0.35) of the "bilingual ability" variable is statistically significant at the same time. It may be substantively argued that the younger respondents differ from their elder counterparts in that most young Korean-Americans prefer a gradual unification, but they surpass older Korean-Americans in the proportion of those who prefer a drastic kind of unification.

Concerning Korean-Americans' evaluations of the most urgent tasks facing the two Koreas, the regression coefficient of the "age" variable is not found to be statistically significant. However, the finding about the generation gap in Korean-Americans' assessment of urgent tasks needs more explanation. I provided four response categories for the urgent-tasks question: meetings of separated family members, activating inter-Korean cooperation, resuming inter-governmental talks, and transforming the armistice agreement into a peace treaty. I found that a plurality of Korean-Americans place a priority on non-political issues such as the reunion of separated family members and activating inter-Korean cooperation rather than on political problems like resuming inter-governmental talks and developing a peace treaty. It is also evident, however, that there is a remarkable generation gap in Korean-Americans' perception of what are the most urgent issues. Breaking down response categories on the urgent-task question by age group, I find the low mean scores of the 16-to-19 age group (0.14) and the 20-to-29 age group (0.11) contrast with the relatively high mean scores of the other age groups, resulting in the statistically significant F value (4.51). In other words, it is reasonable to say that the younger Korean-Americans differ from their elder counterparts in that, even though most young Korean-Americans place a priority on non-political issues, they are more likely than the older Korean-Americans to see political issues as urgent for Korean reconciliation.

The second category of measures of Korean-Americans' beliefs about the unification process involves two components of their attitudes regarding peaceful coexistence of the Koreas. I tested the hypothesis that Korean-Americans of the younger generation differed from those of the older generation in that they are more likely to endorse the assumption that North Korea should be stable and be making peaceful changes, and to support the separate but simultaneous entry of North and South Korea into the United Nations in 1991. Regarding the generation gap in Korean-Americans' endorsement of North Korean social stability, I found that young respondents tended to support it less than did older Korean-Americans. The regression

coefficient (0.03; with  $t$  value of 1.91) of the "age" variable is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that even though young Korean-Americans evaluate North Korean stability positively, they are less likely than those in the other age groups to think unification policies based on the North Korean stability to be favorable to reconciling the two Koreas. In measuring attitudes toward the two Koreas' entry into the United Nations, generational differences among Korean-American respondents is found to be statistically insignificant (-0.01; with  $t$  value of -0.55). However, when the response categories are broken down by age groups, the mean score of the 16-to-19 age group (0.16) is shown to considerably depart from the total mean score (0.25). I would say that the evaluation of Korean-Americans in the youngest age group concerning the simultaneous entry of North and South Korea into the United Nations is significantly distant from that of Korean-Americans in the other age groups.

Another measure employed in this study to represent Korean-Americans' beliefs about the unification process concerns their support of two South Korea's aid programs to North Korea. I tested a hypothesis that the young Korean-Americans support South Korea's decision to provide rice and financial aid to North Korea for developing its atomic energy facilities. The test results concerning these two policy preferences are contradictory to each other, but very suggestive. Asked about South Korea's providing North Korea with 150,000 tons of rice, a majority of the Korean-Americans indicated that it was a good thing. A great majority of Korean-Americans support South Korea's food aid to North Korea, and this support was widespread across all age groups. The regression coefficient (-0.01; with  $t$  values of -0.41) was statistically insignificant, and it is hard to say that young Korean-Americans' strong support of the food aid is discernible from older Korean-Americans' support. In measuring attitudes toward South Korea's aid to atomic energy facilities, however, I found that there is a remarkable difference between the views of young Korean-Americans and those of their elders. More young Korean-Americans than older Korean-Americans are found to believe that South Korea's providing North Korea with financial and technical support for its atomic energy facilities is not so good (regression coefficient 0.12). In particular, those in the 16-to-19 age group (-0.25) and in the 20-to-29 age group (0.06) have their respective mean scores below the average (0.22). This variation leads to a relatively high  $t$  value (4.99) and is statistically significant. I would say that the young Korean-Americans represented by the respondents in the

16-to-19 and 20-to-29 age groups have a rigid but reasonable stance on South Korea's aid to North Korea, supporting South Korea's humanitarian aid to as much as do the older Korean-Americans, on the one hand, but being more likely than their elders to disapprove of South Korea's nuclear-related aid to North Korea, on the other hand. Based on these findings, it is argued that among Korean-Americans commitment to a humanitarian and gradual approach to Korean unification appears to have persisted over past decades and to have survived the enormous socioeconomic changes in the Korean-American community. However, it is also evident that young Korean-Americans' departure from this commitment in some respects is also clear and consistent.

A growing skepticism among young people about the desirability and effectiveness of government planning and control corresponds to a growing concern about the government's unification policies among the young generation. I tested a hypothesis that they have less knowledge about formal unification formulas presented by the two Korean governments than older Korean-Americans. Likewise, I tested a hypothesis that younger people approve of the efforts being made by the two governments less than do older Korean-Americans. [See Table 5]

I measured Korean-Americans' policy knowledge with questions regarding the Korean National Community Unification Formula, South Korea's formula, and the Korean Federal System Formula, North Korea's plan. Table 5 shows a tabulation of the generation gap in policy knowledge and policy preferences. Testing how aware Korean-Americans appear to be of the differences in Korean unification formulas, I found that there is remarkable deviation across respondent age groups. There is a strong association between Korean-Americans' knowledge of the formulas and their ages, showing that young Korean-Americans have even less knowledge about the formulas than do their elders. In particular, the ignorance about the formulas among Korean-Americans in the 16-to-19 and 20-to-29 age groups is outstanding, but it is noteworthy that the lack of knowledge is observed among Korean-Americans born in the United States and those having resided in the United States only a short time, as well as young Korean-Americans. By contrast, ignorance about the North Korean unification formula is observed among Korean-Americans with English-Korean bilingual ability and short duration of residence in the United States as well as among the young generation of Korean-Americans.

Based on the anti-government mood among young people, I tested a hypothesis that Korean-Americans in the younger age groups are less likely to approve of the North Korean government's unification policies than are Korean-Americans in the older age groups. I asked respondents how much they thought the South Korean or North Korean government was making efforts toward unification. As shown in the last four rows in table 5, respondents overall tended to evaluate positively the South Korean government's efforts (the regression coefficient is 0.11), but to evaluate negatively those of the North Korean government (the regression coefficient is 0.03). Especially, margins of the assessment of the South Korean government's efforts, broken down by Korean-Americans age groups, clearly shows that a generation gap exists in their assessments. Substantively speaking, Korean-Americans in the younger generation tend to have an optimistic stance on South Korean unification policies, but the intensity and strength of their approval is somewhat weaker than those of older Korean-Americans. However, when asked to evaluate the North Korean government's efforts toward unification, a majority of Korean-Americans indicated that North Korea was not very much or not at all making such efforts. In particular, I cannot find any statistical significance in the regression coefficient (0.03). This skeptical posture of Korean-Americans toward North Korean government unification policies is found evenly distributed among Korean-Americans across age groups. However, the regression coefficients of the "bilingual ability" and the "duration of residence in the United States" variables are statistically significant. It is reasonable to say that the Korean-Americans in the younger age groups have negative views of the North Korean government, as do their elders, and that all age groups are very doubtful of North Korean unification policies. Throughout the early 1990s, Korean-Americans were increasingly insecure about the North Korean nuclear development agenda. This preoccupation with the perceived military threat to South Korea became a major obsession.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The Korean-American community is a unique society in that its members have both strong traditional values and Western values at the same time, on the one hand, and they are experiencing marked economic achievement and an obvious intergenerational replacement, on the other hand. In particular, in what signifies the substance of value shift among Korean-Americans, the democratic values held by the intergenerational replacement sometimes co-exist or interpenetrate and

sometimes clash with or are counterbalanced by traditional values. This proposition leads to an assumption that the intergenerational replacement of the Korean-American community has impact on Korean-Americans' postures on the reunification of their motherland. I employed the 1995 survey data to examine intergenerational contrasts on a number of Korean unification issues. These survey data do not deal with a sample randomly selected from a subpopulation of young Korean-American age group. I instead employ the age group analysis to identify impacts of intergenerational replacement on the Korean-American community and on Korean-Americans' attitudes toward the reunification of Korea.

It should be kept in mind that the variation in unification beliefs across age groups of Korean-Americans might not derive from actual differences in the beliefs of the younger and the older generations. That is, analysis of unification beliefs of different age groups cannot ignore the possibility that life-cycle influences may be operative. In recognition of this possible life-cycle impact on the Korean-American community, I hypothesized that Korean-Americans' socioeconomic values and their attitudes toward Korean unification would be expected to change over time and to vary across age groups. I proposed the hypothesis that the variation in Korean-Americans' unification beliefs based on a generation gap is significantly observed in the contemporary Korean-American community, as a result of intergenerational replacement. I need to examine whether the intergenerational replacement is to some degree making a contribution to the variation in Korean-American value shifts among different age groups. By employing the 1995 survey data, I identified socioeconomic characteristics of the younger Korean-American age groups by comparing their responses on various social values to those of the elders as follows:

First, I found that Korean-Americans in the young age groups have greater bilingual ability, favor Protestantism, and have a higher U.S. birth rate than those in the older age groups. It is possible that as the Korean-American community ages and becomes more involved in the national life of the United States, younger Korean-Americans are increasingly likely to hold Western or American values than their elder counterparts. It is inevitable that the social and economic attitudes held by the younger Korean-American generation will be associated with some forces molding the Korean immigrant community.

Second, I found that Korean-Americans in the younger age groups tend to think the most important issue for them is the problem



of identity resulting from dual nationalities and economic stability. This value choice is most conspicuous among the Korean-American group in their teens and derives from their experiences with dramatic social changes such as political stability, detente, and economic growth over recent decades. It may be suggested that this value change enforces young Korean-Americans' tendency to adopt democratic values and an anti-government mood. I also found in the 1995 survey that young Korean-Americans are more active participants in various social activities which are assumed to promote democracy.

Third, I found that the education level of the Korean-American respondents in the 1995 survey is closely associated with their age at the aggregate level. There is no doubt that Korean immigrants are deeply committed to the enterprise of education, and education historically has been an attractive value among young Korean-Americans. However, the young people's commitment to high-level education differs from that of their elders, in that their valuing of education is closely associated with their commitment to both their own ambitions and their own hard work. It is worthy of notice that the younger Korean-American generation was the first to experience the massive expansion of educational programs influenced by the United States.

Some socioeconomic characteristics of the younger Korean-American age groups have important implications for exploring the generation gap in attitudes toward Korean unification. I provided three questions concerning how the new sociopolitical values of the younger Korean-American generation could raise potential discord over unification issues. I operationalized and discussed the intergenerational gap in Korean-Americans' unification beliefs based on the projection of the Korean unification continuum, the preferred process of unifying the two Koreas continuum, and the knowledge and assessment of the two Korean governments' policy continuum. Drawing on the 1995 survey, I employed three question items to examine the generation gap in Korean-Americans' projection of the Korean reunification possibilities. I designed six question items to see whether young Korean-Americans, with more democratic values than older Korean-Americans, supported a liberal and peaceful unification process over a drastic process. I also made use of four question items to test the hypothesis that Korean-Americans in the younger age groups, with their relatively higher education levels, are more or less likely than those in the older age groups to be familiar with the two Korean governments' unification formulas and to approve of them. I found

that ten out of thirteen cases tested (76.9 percent) are statistically significant at least at the 0.01 level. In most cases, Korean-Americans' attitudes toward the unification of the two Koreas are observed to be fairly associated with their age groups. It is evident that there are significant intergenerational differences in Korean-Americans' unification beliefs.

In particular, major findings of this study suggest policy implications. First, I found that Korean-Americans are most likely to think the unification of Korea to be definitely necessary, but should be appropriately pace. Korean-American respondents in the 16-to-19 and 20-to-29 age groups are less likely than those in the other age groups to regard the reunification of two Koreas as indispensable at this moment. This finding corresponds to another, that young Korean-Americans are less likely than their elder counterparts to think that the Korean reunification is necessary and inevitable. Based on these young Korean-Americans' less optimistic views of unification, I argue that with their increasingly American values, young Korean-Americans are losing interest in Korean unification issues and are becoming skeptical about the reunification prospects of their motherland.

Second, I found that Korean-Americans clearly show a generation gap in their preferred ways of achieving unification. Even if a majority of Korean-Americans think it desirable for the two Koreas to cooperate first in economics and culture before reunifying, more younger Korean-Americans than their elders prefer a dramatic unification process, like the reunification of Germany, over a gradual process. This finding is equivalent to another finding, that young Korean-Americans, more than their elder counterparts, tend to see political issues like resuming inter-governmental talks and developing a peace treaty as urgent before North and South Korea can be reconciled. By contrast, older Korean-Americans place a comparative priority on nonpolitical issues such as reuniting of separated family members and promoting inter-Korean cooperation. I also found that Korean-Americans in the younger age groups, especially those in their teens, were less likely than those of the older generation to approve an assumption that North Korea should be stable and should be making peaceful changes. Korean-Americans in their teens are also observed to disapprove of the simultaneous but separate entry of the two Koreas into the United Nations, and to South Korea's supporting of North Korea's developing atomic energy facilities. Among Korean-Americans, even if the commitment to the humanitarian and gradual approach to Korean unification appears to have persisted over the past

decades and to have survived the enormous socioeconomic changes in the Korean-American community, young Korean-Americans' departure from this commitment is clearly and consistently observed. The young Korean-Americans' attitudes toward the process of the unification are more severe and rigid than those of the older generation.

Third, I found that neither the South Korean nor the North Korean unification formula is sufficiently well known to Korean-Americans, though young Korean-Americans are found to have even less knowledge of the formulas than their elders. In particular, ignorance about the unification formulas is outstanding among Korean-Americans in the 16-to-19 age group who belong to the "second generation" group. Young Korean-Americans have an optimistic stance on South Korean unification policies, but the intensity and strength of their approval is weaker than that of the older generation. I argue that a growing skepticism among young people about the desirability and effectiveness of the government's planning and control corresponds to a growing concern about the government's unification policies among Korean-Americans in the younger generation. In other words, evidence is presented here that suggests the declining support among the young Korean-American population for unification policies may be part of a long-term trend linked with an anti-government mood among them. The erosion of political support for government policy is not likely to accelerate; but it may be difficult to avoid in the long run. I could not find any significant intergenerational differences in Korean-Americans' assessment of North Korea's efforts toward unification. However, the 1995 survey demonstrates that a majority of Korean-Americans evaluate North Korea's efforts very negatively. It is reasonable to say that the Korean-Americans in the younger age group have as negative images of the North Korean government as their parents, and thus they are very doubtful of its unification policies. I argue that the anti-government mood among Korean-Americans in the younger generation leads to less knowledge and more distrust of the government's unification policies than is found among their elders. In addition, I argue that their cool position regarding North Korea is inherited from their earlier generations of Koreans, and that their negative images of North Korea lead to ignorance of and indifference toward North Korean unification policies.

An important lesson may be drawn for the formation and conduct of unification policies. Even if the unification policy agenda changes in the post-cold war era, the heuristic of intergenerational replacement will still continue to enable the Korean-American

community to process whatever issues dominate the discussion arena. In reality, among most Korean-Americans, there is overall recognition that a secure and stable North Korea is in their interest and that a democratic and stable South Korea benefits them. However, I found a strong degree of correlation linking their beliefs about the unification of their motherland with intergenerational replacement of their community. Given the central place of unification issues in the Korean-American community, attitudes toward the unification held by their descendants will be especially important for the community to guide preferences of their commitment to the inter-Korean and United States-Korean relations. It is obvious from the 1995 survey data employed in this study that young Korean-Americans view Korean reunification issues differently from their elders in terms of its necessity, their knowledge about it, and the unification process preferred. Even if the intergenerational gap in unification beliefs progresses in a slow and gradual manner, its importance should not be underestimated.

In this sense, the presidential election of 1997 in South Korea and Kim Jong Il's ascendancy to power are important turning points in the process of inter-Korean unification - not only because North and South Korea have a good opportunity to resume talks under the autonomous procedure, but also because the possibility of United States diplomatic recognition of North Korea is bigger than before. It implies that the young Korean-American population, born and brought up in the post-Korean War era, is likely to play an unprecedented role in the Korean-American community.



## Notes

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**1. In political analysis, some theoretical models are normally used to define a political generation. See Kenneth P. Adler, "The Successor Generation: Why, Who and How," in Stephen F. Szabo, ed., *The Successor Generation: International Perspectives of***

*Postwar Europeans* (Boston, MA: Butterworths, 1983), pp. 4-16.

2. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); *Cultural Shift in Advanced Industrial Community* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

3. Eun-Ja Park, "Voices of Korean-American Students," *Adolescence* 30, 120 (Winter 1995), pp. 945-53.

4. Tae Hwan Kwak, "The United Nations and Reunification," in Young Whan Kihl, ed., *Korea and the World* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 301-12.

5. National Unification Board, *To Build a National Community through the Korean Commonwealth: A Blueprint for Korean Unification* (Seoul: National Unification Board, 1989); Seo-Hang Lee, "Seoul's Unification Approach and Perspectives on Peace and Security," in Amos A. Jordan, ed., *Korean Unification: Implications for Northeast Asia* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1993), pp. 17-28.

6. For more discussion about Korean unification and confederation scenarios, see Young C. Kim, "Prospects for Korean Reunification: An Assessment," in Kihl, *Korea and the World*, pp. 253-60.

7. Concerning the generation gap in political attitudes, for example, there is a general finding that young people tend to be less militaristic than older people. See Barbara Bardes and Robert Oldendick, "Beyond Internationalism: A Case for Multiple Dimensions in the Structure of Foreign Policy Attitudes," *Social Science Quarterly* 59, 3 (December 1987), pp. 496-507.