

# **An Analysis of Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Variations in Types of Voluntary Associations in the Korean American Community**

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## **Introduction**

Knoke asserts that "a minimal definition of a voluntary association is a formally organized named group, most of whose members are not financially recompensed for their participation."<sup>1</sup> As Sills notes, all non-state, common-purpose organizations with voluntary memberships may be considered voluntary associations - organizations whose existence is dependent upon freedom of association.<sup>2</sup> A review of the literature, however, reveals that substantial variations exist in the definition of voluntary associations.<sup>3</sup> For example, previous studies of voluntary associations differ with regard to the inclusion or exclusion of such organizations as labor unions, churches, business and trade associations, political parties, professional societies, and philanthropic groups.<sup>4</sup> There is, nevertheless, a consensus that "the voluntary association is a nonprofit, non-government, private group which an individual joins by choice,"<sup>5</sup> and that voluntary associations are "spare-time, participatory associations" to which people belong without pay.<sup>6</sup> Voluntary associations have offices filled through established procedures, periodic scheduled meetings, qualifying criteria for membership, and some formalized division of labor, although organizations do not necessarily exhibit all of these characteristics to the same degree.<sup>7</sup>

More than one hundred and fifty years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville<sup>8</sup> observed that "Americans of all ages, all conditions, and all dispositions, constantly form associations" to serve personal interests and to solve problems, from the most mundane to the most profound.<sup>9</sup> It has been pointed out that Americans frequently turn to voluntary associa-

tions to solve social, political, and personal problems.<sup>10</sup> On the whole, voluntary associations are generally regarded as essential ingredients of a pluralist, democratic society.<sup>11</sup>

Previous studies of voluntary associations have largely focused on the empirical analysis of relationships between association involvement and such individual characteristics as age, sex, race, educational attainment, marital status, and income.<sup>12</sup> Smith and Freedman describe research into voluntary associations as being "in great disarray." They assert that "researchers have yet to explain in more than ad hoc ways just how such status dimensions come to be related to greater or lesser levels of involvement."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, sociological attention to this field of research has been limited to social correlates of joining and participation, with individual potential members as the primary units of analysis.<sup>14</sup> Only a few studies address the subject at the organizational level, with the voluntary association itself as the unit of analysis.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, few sociological studies have ever focused on the analysis of voluntary associations in ethnic immigrant communities in the United States.

As Kyrsan and D'Antonio indicate, voluntary associations exist for differing reasons and have varying objectives.<sup>16</sup> Prior research has established three categories for use in discussing voluntary associations: "instrumental," "expressive," and "instrumental-expressive."<sup>17</sup> Expressive organizations include hobby clubs, sports associations, senior citizens clubs, church-related groups, alumni associations, fraternal societies, and others which "provide the opportunity for carrying on activities of direct interest to participants or help to provide satisfactions of personal fellowship."<sup>18</sup> In contrast, "the major function and orientation of the instrumental organization are related to activities which take place outside the organization; it seeks to maintain a condition or to bring about change which transcends its immediate membership and members identify with the group, at least in part, because of its commitment to goals which do not contribute directly to their own personal and immediate satisfactions."<sup>19</sup> Examples of instrumental organizations include the Young Republicans, the Ku Klux Klan, and the League of Women Voters.<sup>20</sup> An "instrumental-expressive" group provides a framework within which both types of activities can take place.<sup>21</sup>

Voluntary associations may serve personal as well as societal functions. Membership may provide individuals with opportunities to learn social norms and acquire information, while also increasing self-esteem and the perception of individual efficacy and combating isolation.<sup>22</sup> Such integrative functions of voluntary associations at the community and individual levels can be extremely important for the

adaptation and settlement of new ethnic immigrants in urban America.

Previous studies of voluntary associations in ethnic immigrant communities have observed that voluntary associations cushion the shock of transition to a new society. They also offer incentives for adapting to that society, provide a setting in which to practice American behavior, and thus, aid in the "Americanization" of immigrant groups.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, when interchange between native and ethnic groups is blocked, ethnic organizations may multiply and gain strength as "compensatory strategies" that allow escape from mainstream American life or a means of exercising ethnic group pressure.<sup>24</sup>

Compensatory theory argues that "those in lower status positions affiliate and participate in voluntary associations for prestige, ego enhancement, and achievement restricted or denied them in the larger society."<sup>25</sup> While this proposition is most frequently applied to the African-American community, it is equally relevant to any racial and ethnic minority. Olsen presents an alternative thesis - "ethnic community theory" - to account for the active participation of ethnic groups in voluntary associations.<sup>26</sup> Ethnic community theory states that "those in a given ethnic community develop a consciousness of each other and hence a cohesiveness because of pressures exerted against them by outsiders."<sup>27</sup> The theory asserts that "through a sense of ethnic community, minority members form groups to deal with an alien environment and problems forced on them by the majority."<sup>28</sup> Previous analyses of the affiliation and participation of ethnic minorities in voluntary associations have found support for both of these theories.<sup>29</sup> Although they were developed to account for variations in voluntary association participation, it is believed that both compensatory theory and ethnic community theory are also applicable to the formation, multiplication, and composition of voluntary associations in ethnic communities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this paper is to analyze cross-sectional and longitudinal variation in the types of voluntary organizations in Korean American communities. More specifically, this study examines differences in the types of voluntary associations in six selected metropolitan areas having Korean American communities of different sizes. In addition, this paper investigates changes in the composition of voluntary associations in each Korean American community since the 1980s.

Analysis of the composition of voluntary associations in a given immigrant community provides information about the nature of immigrants' needs as they undergo the process of adapting to the host community. Furthermore, overlapping patterns across different

communities may reflect common functions and services demanded in the immigrant communities. On the other hand, changes in the composition of voluntary associations in a given community over time may reflect the evolution of needs as the immigrant community matures and adjusts.

### **Hypotheses**

On the basis of the information obtained from the literature review discussed in the preceding sections, I propose the following hypotheses:

- 1) Consistent with both compensatory and ethnic community theories, Korean American communities will manifest a tendency to form various types of voluntary associations to meet the needs of the immigrant group.
- 2) Due to variations in community needs, the composition of voluntary associations will differ by the size of the Korean American population of the community. A community with a relatively small number of Korean immigrants will have a small number of associations. Little diversity will be found in the type of voluntary associations available in the community. Voluntary associations found in relatively small ethnic communities will more likely be multipurpose organizations than those found in communities having larger ethnic populations.
- 3) Voluntary associations in a given Korean American community will become increasingly diverse in composition as the size of the Korean American population in the community grows over time.
- 4) According to the typology of voluntary associations, multipurpose "instrumental" organizations will emerge initially to serve the needs of new immigrants. As the ethnic community matures overtime, "expressive" organizations will multiply to meet the changing specific needs of the immigrant group.
- 5) The larger the size of the Korean American population in the community, the greater will be the proportion of organizations with American origins. As an ethnic community achieves critical mass in both size and Americanization, an increasing number of Korean American chapters will form within mainstream American national organizations.

### **Data and Methods of Analysis**

The data used in this study were obtained from the "Korean

Directories" for each of the selected metropolitan areas for different years. These directories are published either by the local Korean Association or by commercial advertising/printing companies. "Korean Business Directories," published by Korean American newspapers in different metropolitan areas, are used to supplement the Korean directories. These directories, covering the period of 1981-1997, provide name and contact information for each organization. The time periods covered by the directories vary from one area to another, thus rendering consistent, systematic, cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses impossible. Furthermore, the accuracy of the coverage of voluntary associations by the directories may be questionable in general, and the degree of accuracy may differ from one metropolitan area to another. The rates of undercount for smaller and newer organizations will be greater than those for larger and older organizations. Nevertheless, these directories are the only sources of data currently available for this study. So long as the undercount rate does not vary significantly by type of voluntary association, the coverage of these directories will not greatly influence the analysis of these associations.

For this analysis, voluntary associations identified in each of the selected metropolitan areas for a given year are categorized into sixteen types: professional, fraternal/social, veterans, hobby, business, service, youth, sports, political, community serving, church-related, civic, alumni, charity, and church. As indicated earlier, voluntary association typologies used in previous studies vary widely depending upon purpose and scope. Note, however, that the categories used in this study are consistent with those suggested in previous studies.<sup>30</sup> This categorization is arguably the most appropriate, in view of the diversity of voluntary associations in the Korean American community.

Korean American voluntary associations in the Atlanta metropolitan area are categorized into three types: "instrumental," "instrumental-expressive," and "expressive." As noted earlier, previous studies used this typology in their analyses of the "purposes," "interests," and "functions" of the organizations.<sup>31</sup> Because it identifies the general motivations and orientations of organizations in reaching potential members, this typology should prove useful to the analysis of the nature and functions of voluntary associations in Korean American communities.

## **Findings**

A history of Korean American voluntary associations in America must begin with the 1903 organization of the first Korean immigrant church, and the formation of the first patriotic societies soon after the

arrival of Korean immigrants in Hawaii. By 1907, at least twenty-four Korean American voluntary associations had been established in Hawaii alone. The number of Korean immigrant churches in that state had increased to thirty-nine by 1913,<sup>33</sup> As noted by Lyu, the voluntary associations of early Korean immigrants shared identical objectives: "to promote mutual benefit and to protect Korean national interest against Japanese domination."<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to note that the Christian church was the first and most numerous type of Korean immigrant voluntary association in Hawaii. This was due to the fact that many of the early immigrants to Hawaii were Christian before immigrating. The dominance of immigrant churches in the Korean American community of Hawaii prior to the 1930s apparently established a pattern for other Korean immigrant communities during subsequent periods.

As described above, Korean immigrant communities began to appear in Hawaii very early in the twentieth century. In this and other areas, including Southern California, New York, and Chicago, Korean American communities have experienced substantial growth and maturation overtime. A review of the history of voluntary associations in Korean -immigrant communities where the population is still relatively small and the settlement of Korean immigrants in the community was much more recent would be useful at this point. As shown in Appendix A, the first voluntary association of Korean immigrants in Columbia, South Carolina, was the Korean Community Presbyterian Church, formed in 1975. The Korean Association of the Greater Columbia Area was formed six years later, and the Korean Student Association, the Korean Golf Association of Columbia, and other churches were formed soon after. In February 1997, eleven Korean American voluntary associations existed in the Columbia metropolitan area. In addition to seven churches, these groups included the Korean Association of the Greater Columbia Area, the Korean Golf Association, the Korean Tennis Association, and the Korean Student Association.

The Korean American Association of the Greater Fayetteville, North Carolina, Area was organized in 1970, and the Fayetteville Korean Baptist Church, formed in 1974, was the first Korean American church in the area. Sixteen different Korean American voluntary associations, including eleven churches, were active in the Fayetteville metropolitan area as of February 1997. In Augusta, a metropolitan area crossing the Georgia-South Carolina state line, the first voluntary association in the Korean American community was once again a church, the Augusta Korean Presbyterian Church, established in 1978. The next organization was the Korean Association, established in 1981.

The fact that ethnic immigrant churches were formed prior to any

other type of voluntary association suggests that at least some Korean immigrants in the community might have been Christian before settling in the area. It also suggests that shared religious experience is more powerful than other common background characteristics or interests. Because more than twenty percent of the Korean population identify themselves as Christian, church affiliation is likely to have been the most common background

characteristic shared by immigrants in a relatively small community. In discussing the functions of the church in Korean American communities, Kim observed:

...in order to make a community life possible, the church accentuates nonreligious, secular functions. The church creates a family atmosphere in its intra-church activities and becomes a substitute for the extended family. By linking its congregation to the bureaucratic institutions of the larger society, the church assumes the role of a broker; by sustaining and enhancing Korean culture and tradition, the church becomes a center of Korean nationalism.<sup>35</sup>

As the only formal ethnic organization in the Korean immigrant community, the church provided a variety of functions and services to the ethnic community, in addition to the traditional religious functions. The growth of the Korean immigrant population in relatively small metropolitan areas began in the early 1970s, subsequent to the Immigration Act of 1965. This growth coincided with the initial formation of churches and Korean associations in those communities. Compensatory theory suggests that participation in voluntary associations meets a number of the social and psychological needs of new immigrants in small metropolitan areas. Consistent with ethnic community theory, however, the churches and other organizations had not been formed until the size of the Korean immigrant group reached a critical mass, thus forming an ethnic community.

A review of the constitutions and by-laws of "Korean Associations" shows the primary purposes of the organizations to be: 1) to promote solidarity among members of the association; 2) to provide needed services for members; 3) to connect and represent the Korean American community to the local, state, and other administrative and government agencies; 4) to preserve Korean traditional customs and culture by organizing cultural activities and celebrating the traditional Korean holidays; 5) to protect the rights of members as citizens and legal residents of the United States, and to enhance their status and welfare. The emergence of Korean Associations apparently reduced the secular functions of the churches, especially the provision of services for new immigrants in the community.

A combination of several different factors contributed to the continuation of the community-service orientation among Korean American churches. One factor was the lack of effective leaders in the Korean Associations who were educated in the United States, who were proficient in the English language, and who had prior experience in community service. Another factor was the fact that Korean immigrant churches willingly accepted community-service roles in order to recruit new members. The effectiveness of their community-service programs became an important determinant of the reputation and growth of a church. Church involvement in community-service activities has declined to some extent, even in relatively small Korean American communities, as a result of the growth and maturity of non-church community-service organizations. However, it would be safe to say that Korean immigrant churches still provide a variety of secular community services to existing and potential members. Additionally, the extent of church involvement could be expected to be greater in smaller than in larger communities. Because it nurtures the spiritual needs of immigrants and also provides a "family atmosphere" more effectively than other voluntary associations, the church will remain the focal point of the immigrant community.

Another interesting finding is that the Korean Golf Association was formed at an early stage of immigrant settlement in the Columbia, Augusta, and Fayetteville areas. This may reflect several different contexts in which the formation of these groups has occurred. First, golf has been extremely popular in Korea for the last three decades, and the popularity of the sport may have been transplanted to Korean immigrant communities. Second, golf is regarded by Koreans and by Korean immigrants as a "status symbol," a classy sport played by individuals of relatively high socioeconomic status. Thus, Korean immigrants may feel that they gain status by forming and joining golf associations. Third, a substantial proportion of the Korean immigrant population is between the ages of forty and fifty-nine, and golf is particularly suitable for such a middle-age group. Fourth, the costs associated with playing golf in the United States are quite reasonable in comparison with those in Korea, and being able to afford to play the game may signify that one has "made it." Finally, the title of "president" of the Korean Golf Association may have "a nice ring to it," especially to individuals seeking some type of status in the ethnic community.

Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 present data on the composition of Korean American voluntary associations in the Atlanta, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles metropolitan areas for the period of 1981 - 1997. The 1990 Census showed wide variation in the size of the Korean American



population in these metropolitan areas: from 9,568 in Atlanta to 194,198 in Los Angeles. To understand the composition patterns of voluntary associations by type, it would be useful to examine the data for each area separately.

**TABLE 1: Perceptions of the Current and Past Political Systems**

| <i>Scale<br/>Points</i>   | <i>Past regime<br/>(1980-88)</i> | <i>Distribution (%)<br/>Current regime<br/>(1998-present)</i> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 (complete dictatorship) | 10.5                             | 0.9   |
| 2                         | 17.3                             | 0.8   |
| 3                         | 19.8                             | 5.1   |
| 4                         | 18.8                             | 5.5   |
| 5                         | 20.3                             | 19.3  |
| 6                         | 8.8                              | 32.3  |
| 7                         | 2.9                              | 22.5  |
| 8                         | 1.2                              | 10.5  |
| 9                         | 0.3                              | 2.3   |
| 10 (complete democracy)   | 0.1                              | 0.5   |
| (mean score)              | 3.9                              | 5.9   |

Source: 1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey

The most striking feature regarding the composition patterns of the Atlanta area is that churches and church-related organizations comprise almost half of the total number of voluntary associations in the Korean American community. In addition, the proportion of churches in the total number of organizations has remained about the same since 1982. This may reflect that, throughout the history of Korean settlement in the United States, church organizations have predominated in the Korean American community. In commenting on the latent functions of the Protestant church, Kim indicated that:

...in order to help Korean immigrants cope with the larger society, the churches unknowingly revive and promulgate their version of the Protestant ethic of nineteenth-century America. The ideological coherence of the churches lies in their emphasis on endless self-

abnegation, endurance, hardship, and frugality. These puritan virtues are compatible with Confucian values, which Korean immigrants, regardless of their religious affiliation, have already internalized in their homeland. The churches reinforce the traditional Korean values of self-control and self-abnegation in a Protestant context. The church makes Korean immigrants vigilant and ready to sustain the kind of combat discipline necessary for survival in the larger society.

The second most numerous type of voluntary association in the Atlanta area was the alumni association. Fifty-six different alumni associations existed in the Atlanta area as of February 1997. Alumni associations comprised 26.4% of all organizations in 1997, and this proportion has been about the same since the 1980s. Alumni associations can be classified into two categories: middle and high school alumni associations, and college/university alumni associations. The number of middle and high school alumni associations was twenty-nine, while the number of college and university alumni associations was twenty-seven.

Only three of the fifty-six alumni associations were for American institutions; the remaining fifty-three were for the schools attended by Korean-born immigrants prior to their immigration to this country. Some comments about these alumni associations may be in order here. First, given the size of the Korean American population in the area - 9,568 as of the 1990 census - the actual size of most of these alumni associations is very small. Second, the function of these associations is primarily social - an association may have several meetings per year to celebrate major holidays together with dinner parties and picnics. Third, alumni associations may be regarded as primary groups providing a "family atmosphere" for the formation of trustworthy relationships. According to Kim, alumni associations are subdivided by year of graduation and by "meetings of old classmates who tend to form congenial peer groups and eat, drink, and talk together at alumni parties; they maintain and intensify a solidarity among themselves and their solidarity evolves through such activities as making matches for unmarried persons, giving picnics, birthday parties, Christmas parties or forming a *gye* and other kinds of mutual assistance."<sup>37</sup> The heavy representation of church and alumni organizations in the population of Korean American voluntary associations in the Atlanta area has significant implications for the current position of voluntary associations in the direction and orientation of the Korean American community. Churches provide a number of latent functions to help immigrants cope with the larger society, and alumni associations have played constructive and helpful roles in supporting their members. Neither

type of organization, however, has had significant and consistent contact with the mainstream American community at the local level. Instead, their activities have been largely directed either toward members of organizations or toward the larger Korean American community. The fact that the two most numerous types of organizations are largely oriented toward intra-ethnic relationships seems to affect the orientation of the entire ethnic community.

As of February 1997, sixteen different business and trade associations existed in the Atlanta metropolitan area. This category includes owner associations for such specific lines of small businesses as beauty supply, dry cleaning, clothing, automobile service, groceries, restaurant, and liquor, as well as for the Chamber of Commerce, International Trade Association, Korea Town Association, Association for Women in Business, and others. The number of voluntary associations related to business and trade activities has increased from only two in 1982 to sixteen in 1997. This could reflect the rapid increase in the number of Korean immigrants in the Atlanta area who have been engaged in small-business activities in recent years. Business and trade associations may provide important services to their members, including disseminating information about government regulations for particular lines of business, organizing group purchases directly from manufacturers and importers, arranging price agreements and controls, and sharing information about bank loans and credit. Hence, business associations enable their members to interact not only with other merchants in the same line of business, but they also play intermediary roles, connecting individual members to the larger society. Nevertheless, the primary function of these associations is still social in nature, emphasizing and promoting solidarity and mutual assistance among members.

Three of the ten sports organizations were golf associations: the Korean Golf Association of Atlanta, the Senior Golf Association, and the Elders (*Yeonjangja*) Golf Association. It is interesting to note that two separate golf associations were based on age. This may be explained by the fact that, in Korean culture, age is an important variable in both formal and informal groups. Maintaining and enhancing the status of relatively older individuals requires that they form their own golf associations. Also, it is possible that the desire for a "family atmosphere" among golf buddies was met only by smaller, more homogenous groups.

It should be noted that only three of the Korean American associations in the Atlanta area were oriented toward political activity as of February 1997. It is possible that other organizations, which were not classified as political, nevertheless performed certain political functions as part of their activities. The participation of Korean Americans in

mainstream American politics is still limited, however, perhaps reflecting the tendency of Korean Americans to participate mostly in intra-ethnic activities directed toward Korean issues. In addition, the small numbers of "youth," "civic," and "charity" groups suggest that the Korean American community requires further maturation before it can achieve such diversity in the types of voluntary associations. Alternatively, the functions of Korean immigrant churches and other community-service-oriented voluntary associations may include programs involving youth, civic and charity affairs, at least to some extent. It is possible, therefore, that there was no compelling need for such specialized organizations.

I analyzed data on the composition of voluntary associations in the Atlanta metropolitan area by three types, "instrumental," "instrumental-expressive," and "expressive." As of February 1977, nearly eighty percent (79.1%) of all organizations were "expressive," while "instrumental" and "instrumental-expressive" types comprised 14.2% and 6.6%, respectively. The total number of voluntary associations increased from forty-five in 1982 to over two hundred in 1997. The number of "expressive" organizations increased from 36 to 167 in the same period of time, while the number of "instrumental" organizations increased from four to thirty and "instrumental-expressive" groups increased from five to fourteen during the same period. The absolute increase was greatest for the "expressive" type, while the relative increase - as measured by the ratio of the number of organizations in 1997 to that in 1982 - was greater for the "instrumental" type.

The Korean American population in the Atlanta metropolitan area increased from 2,749 in 1980 to 9,568 in 1990, and the estimated population for 1997 was about 20,000. As hypothesized, the data show concomitant increases in the number of types of voluntary associations and population size. The increase has occurred in both the "instrumental" and "expressive" types of organizations. An increase in the number of business/trade associations was responsible for the increase in "instrumental" organizations, while an increase in the number of Korean immigrant churches was the primary source of increase for the "expressive" type. This was expected, since the economic participation of Korean immigrants is heavily concentrated in the small-business sector, and participation in intra-ethnic activities is largely through churches.

**TABLE 2: Citizen Empowerment and System Responsiveness**

| <i>Degrees</i> | <i>Citizen Empowerment</i> | <i>System Responsiveness</i> |
|----------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| A lot          | 32.1                       | 3.1                          |
| Some           | 44.3                       | 23.7                         |
| A little       | 20.5                       | 51.1                         |
| None           | 1.6                        | 19.7                         |
| (No answer)    | 1.4                        | 2.4                          |

Source: 1999 Korea Democracy Survey.

**TABLE 3: Experiences of Substantive Democracy**

| <i>Types of Empowerment</i> | <i>Experience of Responsiveness</i> | <i>Distribution (percent)</i> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| No                          | No                                  | 17.1                          |
| No                          | Yes                                 | 4.8                           |
| Yes                         | No                                  | 52.8                          |
| Yes                         | Yes                                 | 21.7                          |
| (no answer)                 |                                     | 3.6                           |

Source: 1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey

**TABLE 4: Evaluations of the Performance  
of the Present Political System**

| <i>Scale<br/>Points</i>      | <i>Current regime<br/>(1998-present)</i> |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1 (complete dissatisfaction) | 1.5                                      |
| 2                            | 5.0                                      |
| 3                            | 6.7                                      |
| 4                            | 0.5                                      |
| 5                            | 34.1                                     |
| 6                            | 25.8                                     |
| 7                            | 10.4                                     |
| 8                            | 3.7                                      |
| 9                            | 1.7                                      |
| 10 (complete satisfaction)   | 0.7                                      |
| <br>(mean score)             | <br>(5.2)                                |

Source: 1999 Korea Democracy Barometer Survey

Tables 2, 3, and 4 show the composition of voluntary associations by type in the Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles metropolitan areas, respectively. One of the most consistent patterns observed from the areas was that churches and church-related organizations have been dominant over the years. Church and church-related organizations comprised 56.5, 73.4, and 60.6 percent of all voluntary associations in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, respectively, for the most recent years. As observed earlier in the data for the Atlanta area, alumni associations were the second most numerous type of voluntary association in all three areas. In fact, church-related organizations and alumni associations together comprised more than three-quarters of the total number of voluntary associations in each of the areas. In particular, as shown in Table 4, of the total 1,098 voluntary associations in the Los Angeles area, 626 were churches and 195 were alumni associations. In view of the fact that the Korean American population in the Los Angeles area was 194,198 as of the 1990 census, and there were 576 churches as of 1989, the population per church ratio was about 338 persons per church. However, it is interesting to note that the proportion of churches in the total number of voluntary associations in 1996 was smaller than that of the 1980s. This may mean that the increase in the

number of Korean immigrant churches has reached the point of saturation, possibly due to a sharp drop in Korean immigration. It may also reflect an increase in the out-migration of Korean residents from the area, which may have been associated with the deteriorating economic conditions in recent years.

It was hypothesized that diversity in the types of voluntary associations available in an immigrant community will increase along with the immigrant population. The data on the composition of voluntary associations for selected areas seem to support the hypothesis. However, the effect of population size on the composition of voluntary associations is not pronounced because it is largely concentrated on the increase in the number of churches and alumni associations, rather than widely spread over different categories. Nevertheless, both the number of organizations in each designated type and the range of interests represented by organizations within a given category increase along with population. For example, no organization in the Atlanta area as of February 1997 was based either on the city or province of birth in Korea or on a Korean surname, whereas nine organizations from Chicago, seven from New York, and twenty-one from Los Angeles were based on regional origin. In addition, eleven different associations of senior citizens existed in the Los Angeles area alone.

It was hypothesized that the proportion of organizations with American origins would be greater in places with larger Korean American populations. More than twenty different voluntary organizations with American origins were listed in the Los Angeles area in 1996, while only a few such organizations were found in the Atlanta, Chicago, or New York areas. Organizations with American origins included the Korean American Coalition, Kiwanis International Club, Korean Labor Association, Korean American Educators Association, Korean American Cross-cultural Association, Korean Youth and Student Union, Young Korean United of Los Angeles, World Mission in USA, Korean College Student Association of Southern California, Hanmi Presbytery of the PCUSA, Korean American Female Ministers Association of the PCUSA, Korean American Management Association, University of Michigan Korean Alumni Association, Korean Alumni Association of UC Berkeley, Korean Alumni Association of UC Irvine, UCLA Korean Alumni Association, UCLA Engineering School Korean Alumni Association, and others. Moreover, more voluntary associations specifically for second-generation United States-born youth and young adult groups and females existed in the Los Angeles area than in the Atlanta, Chicago, and New York areas. This again suggests that diversity in the types of voluntary associations tends

to increase along with population size.

### **Discussion**

The integrative functions of voluntary associations are extremely important for the adaptation of Korean immigrants to the new cultural and socioeconomic environment in the United States. The "activities of Korean immigrants through voluntary associations are the underlying fabric that interweaves, supports, and influences the individual lives of ordinary community members."<sup>38</sup> The data analyzed in this study seem to support the assertion that voluntary associations constitute an extremely important component of immigrant communities. They also suggest that immigrants tend to form various types of voluntary associations to build up their ethnic solidarity and to cope with their new environment.

Korean immigrants seem to manifest unique patterns in the types of voluntary associations that they organize. Protestant churches are overwhelmingly the dominant organizations, regardless of the criteria used, in the ethnic community. Several factors have contributed to this phenomenon: 1) the affiliation of a great majority of middle-class Korean immigrants with churches in Korea; 2) the availability of a large pool of fairly well-trained Protestant ministers; 3) the similarity of the cultural and social norms of Protestant churches in Korea and those of voluntary associations in America, thus eliminating significant amounts of adjustment, modification, and conflict in the organization of Protestant churches; 4) the realization of the desire of immigrants for recognition and status through the opportunity structures provided by churches; and 5) the historical centrality of Protestant churches in the community life of Korean immigrants in the United States, and their provision of various services for immigrants. It is interesting to note that the functions of Korean immigrant churches are complex, and some aspects of their functions are diametrically opposed to their claims. Churches have provided for the spiritual, psychological, and communal needs of Korean immigrants, thus enhancing ethnic group solidarity, especially among church members. The extent of church contribution to the integration of Korean immigrants into the larger socio-cultural structures of mainstream American society, however, has been limited. In fact, it is possible that immigrant churches may have been largely responsible for the *ghettoization* of the Korean immigrant group in urban America by building fences around the associational enclave. The programs and activities organized and executed by Korean immigrant churches may have satisfied immediate needs, leading to complacency, reducing the motivation to seek further assimilation with the larger society. In all fairness to Korean immigrant churches,



although "supply side" factors have partially been responsible, such "demand side" problems as language barriers and cultural background have had a greater impact on the current conditions of isolation among first-generation Korean immigrants.

The fact that churches and alumni associations together comprise a significant majority of voluntary associations in Korean immigrant communities clearly demonstrates that most such associations are "expressive" and oriented toward intra-ethnic activities. Moreover, Korean origin is an important criterion determining qualification for membership in many Korean immigrant voluntary associations, which are frequently organized around school and ascriptive ties, such as surname and place of birth in Korea. Voluntary associations based on such criteria may possibly contribute to the proliferation of voluntary associations in Korean immigrant communities, since there is potentially a fairly large number of surname groups and provinces/cities of birth for Korean immigrants.

This study has focused on the composition of voluntary associations in the Korean immigrant communities, according to the type of organization. The findings from this study add to the limited body of knowledge about voluntary associations in ethnic minority communities. Several limitations of the present study should be noted, however. First, this study addressed the composition of voluntary associations exclusively by type, where the unit of analysis was the voluntary association. It did not examine the correlates of immigrant participation in voluntary associations. Second, variations in the size of voluntary associations were not considered in this study. Since size is an important variable determining many dimensions of an organization, it is essential to consider variations in size by type of voluntary association. Third, the data used in this study are taken from directories published by ethnic newspapers and advertising companies in part for revenue-generating purposes; therefore, the accuracy, completeness, and currency of the information may be questionable. Fourth, the determination of the purpose, orientation, and activities of each organization would require the examination of such organizational documents as constitutions, activity reports, and minutes of meetings, but no attempt to obtain these documents was made in this study. Finally, this study focuses on the composition of voluntary organizations in the Korean American communities of selected metropolitan areas. Voluntary associations in these selected areas may not be representative of the entire population of Korean American voluntary associations, nor should Korean American communities be taken as representative of all ethnic immigrant communities. Future studies on the subject should take into account these limitations of the current

study, and should also include a comparative analysis of interethnic group differences in voluntary associations by addressing several different ethnic immigrant groups.

## Notes

1. David Knoke, "Association and Interest Groups," *Annual Review of Sociology* 12, 1986, pp. 1-21.
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APPENDIX A.

**A List of Korean American Voluntary Associations in Columbia, SC,  
and Augusta, GA-SC for Selected Years.**

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*Columbia, SC*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1982  | 4) Korean Student Association of USC       |
| 1) Korean Association of Greater<br>Columbia Area | 5) Korean Community Presbyterian<br>Church |
| 2) Korean Community Presbyterian<br>Church        | 6) Korean United Methodist Church          |
| 3) Korean United Methodist Church                 | 7) Korean Full Gospel Baptist Church       |
| 4) Korean Seventh Day Adventist<br>Church         | 8) Korean Grace Baptist Church             |
|   | 9) Korean Seventh Day Adventist<br>Church  |
| 1997:   | 10) New Jerusalem Presbyterian Church      |
| 1) Korean Association of Greater<br>Columbia Area | 11) Carolina Korean Presbyterian<br>Church |
| 2) Korean Golf Association                        | 12) Korean Catholic Church of<br>Columbia  |
| 3) Korean Tennis Association                      |  |

*Augusta, GA-SC:*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1982  | 7) Korean Presbyterian Church             |
| 1) Korean Presbyterian Church               | 8) Korean Methodist Church                |
| 2) Korean Association of Augusta            | 9) Korean Full Gospel Church              |
|   | 10) Bethel Korean Presbyterian Church     |
| 1997  | 11) Marvin Korean Methodist Church        |
| 1) Korean Association of Atlanta            | 12) Korean Baptist Church                 |
| 2) Korean Senior Citizens Association       | 13) Yumkwang Korean Church                |
| 3) Korean Golf Association                  | 14) First Korean Baptist Church           |
| 4) Korean Womens Club of Augusta            | 15) Korean Grace Church                   |
| 5) Korean American Womens<br>Association    | 16) Korean American Evangelical<br>Church |
| 6) Council of Korean Churches of<br>Augusta | 17) Korean Catholic Church                |