

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1980\*

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*Based on the analysis of 1980 Public-Use Microdata Samples, this article demonstrates that the Korean immigrant stream, particularly men, has been very selective even before the 1965 reform due mainly to the restrictive U.S. immigration policies, although the significant presence of Korean Americans came after the influx of the post-1965 immigrants, known as a highly selected group. This selectivity is best represented in their high educational profile. However, despite the educational superiority and somewhat positive occupational position, Korean men in the U.S. are seriously disadvantaged in income regardless of nativity status. Korean Americans are not as successful as whites in translating their education into occupation and income; they are better educated for the same job, but experience a lower income return to the same education and the same occupation.*

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the socioeconomic success of Asian Americans has drawn public attention in the United States. As one of the major Asian American ethnic groups, Korean Americans are not an exception, despite the recency of their arrival and their small numbers relative to other Asian groups — the Chinese, Japanese, or Filipinos. The presence of Koreans in significant numbers and their seemingly rapid advances have sometimes contributed to increasing incidents of ethnic conflict involving the Korean community. Most recently, the antagonism between Korean greengrocers and the black community in New York City attracted national attention in the United States. However, while numerous attempts have been made to examine the other Asians in the United States, full and detailed information about the socioeconomic status of Korean Americans is relatively lacking.

The purpose of this article is to describe some of demographic, social, and economic characteristics of Korean Americans in the United States in 1980,

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mainly based on the 1980 U.S. Population Census,<sup>1</sup> rather than on prejudiced or stereotyped images based on fragmentary information which often represent only a small part of the group. This paper focuses on two questions. What kind of Koreans have immigrated to the United States? How do Korean Americans — Korean immigrants and their native-born descendants — fare in the United States in 1980 in terms of educational, occupational, and income status relative to the white? That is, is the socioeconomic status of Korean Americans as high as it has been represented in their public image?

### KOREAN IMMIGRATION AND THE GROWTH OF THE KOREAN POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Although the significant presence of Korean immigration to the United States is basically a recent (post-1965) phenomenon, the root of Korean immigration to the United States dates back to the turn of the century. In the late nineteenth century, the declining Yi dynasty in Korea was suffering from political, social, and economic turmoil, surrounded by the imperialist world powers, succinctly described by the expression, "a shrimp among whales" (Pomerantz 1984, p. 285). After the 1876 Kangwha Treaty imposed by Japan, the Korean government signed a Trade and Friendship Treaty with the United States in 1882. It was also in 1882 that the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act began to restrict the large-scale immigration of Chinese laborers to the United States. Chinese workers had been exploited as a main source of cheap labor for the development of agriculture and industry in Hawaii and on the West Coast (see Cheng and Bonacich 1984).

As the anti-Chinese sentiments increased, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association turned to Korean laborers. Responding to their request, American missionaries in Korea played an important role in the first immigration of Koreans to Hawaii.<sup>2</sup> Distressed by the declining economy, many of dislocated farmers and former soldiers of the disbanded Korean army left for

<sup>1</sup>Much of this analysis is based on the 1980 Population Census, Public-Use Microdata Samples decennially prepared by the Bureau of the Census. Koreans, whites, and blacks were selected by the respondent's self-identity for race and Spanish origin question. Koreans, whites, and blacks in this analysis do not include anyone who responded to the Spanish origin question. From Sample C, the one percent file, all the cases for the Korean group (3,474) were selected. Because of the large number of whites and blacks in the one percent sample of the C sample, all whites and blacks were selected from the 0.1% sample of Sample A, which produced 180,392 whites and 26,378 blacks. For more detailed description of the data file and variables, see the Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1980, Public-Use Microdata Samples Technical Documentation*, 1983.

<sup>2</sup>As a result of the efforts of foreign missionaries beginning in the late 1880s, there were many Christian converts in Korea by the turn of the century, although the main formal ideology of Korea was based on Confucianism (Houchins and Houchins 1974; Kim 1980; Pomerantz 1984).

Hawaii to fill the labor vacuum caused by the Chinese exclusion (Pomerantz 1984). Between 1882 and 1924, about 7,500 to 7,800 Korean contract laborers, predominantly male, went to Hawaii.<sup>3</sup> They were suffering from low wages<sup>4</sup> and austere living and working conditions on Hawaiian plantations. Soon they began to move. A thousand returned to Korea, and about 2,000 left for the mainland (Houchins and Houchins 1974, pp. 549-55). While there was a relatively large scale immigration of Korean laborers to Hawaii, a handful of "students"<sup>5</sup> and political refugees arrived on the U.S. mainland prior to 1905.<sup>6</sup> The Korean population on the mainland grew with the increase of immigrants, directly from Korea or indirectly through Hawaii. Most worked in railroad construction and agricultural industries, particularly in the rice farms (Yim 1984).

As Japan established Korea as a protectorate and the Japanese government banned Korean emigration to Hawaii in 1905, the influx of Korean laborers was suddenly halted. After 1907, the United States refused to recognize Korean passports (Houchins and Houchins 1974, p. 556). By 1909,<sup>7</sup> the immigration of Koreans had been sharply curtailed and restricted only to "non-laborers" since the Gentlemen's Agreement between Japan and the United States now affected the immigration from Korea. Between 1906 and 1924, most Korean arrivals were the kin of Korean residents and "picture brides," who were mostly illiterate women from poor, rural background (Pomerantz 1984, pp. 277, 306) as well as intellectuals and political refugees from Japanese repressive rule (Houchins and Houchins 1974; Kim 1980; Pomerantz 1984). The national origin system of the 1924 Immigration Act ended further Korean immigration.<sup>8</sup>

With the Japanese defeat in 1945 and the U.S. occupation of Korea, immigration from Korea resumed. The McCarran Walter Act of 1952 ended all

<sup>3</sup>Large scale immigration began in 1903, after the Korean government opened the Department of Immigration in 1902. Between 1903 and 1905, 7,226 Koreans — 6,048 men, 637 women, and 541 children arrived in sugar plantations in Hawaii. Many of whom (about 65%) were illiterate (Kim 1974, P. 25).

<sup>4</sup>15-16 dollars a month compared to 18 dollars for their European counterparts (see also Houchins and Houchins 1974; Kim 1980; Pomerantz 1984).

<sup>5</sup>In 1885, the first three Korean men went to the United States. Between 1890 and 1905, 64 students left for further education, also encouraged by American missionaries (Houchins and Houchins 1974; Kim 1980, P. 602).

<sup>6</sup>Among about 8,000 Koreans who went to the United States between the 1880s and 1902, there were small numbers of merchants and students.

<sup>7</sup>Between 1889 and 1910, the total number of Korean immigrants was approximately 8,300 (Houchins and Houchins 1974, p. 548).

<sup>8</sup>Only students and political refugees were reported to have entered the United States, but "they were not emigrants in a genuine sense." The numbers of Korean immigrants remained small until the end of World War II—less than 800 between 1924 and 1956 (Kim 1974, p. 25).

racial bars to naturalization and gave a token quota of 100 a year to Korea. Despite the token quota, there was a considerable rise in immigration from Korea mainly due to the admission of "non-quota" immigrants, which included the kin of U.S. citizens and other selected cases, particularly with the Refugee Act of 1953 after the Korean War (1950-1953). Most Korean immigrants then were war brides of U.S. servicemen or adopted children (see Kim 1974, pp. 26-28, Table II), along with some political refugees up to the 1965 reform. The influx of Korean immigrants began with the 1965 Immigration Act, which was fully effective by 1968. Many of them were reportedly well-educated professionals from the middle or upper class (Kim 1974; Pernia 1976; Rose 1985; Wong 1986). This new wave also included a large number of government officials and political opponents of President Park's Repressive rule (Kim 1980, p. 604).

The growth of the Korean population in the United States during the twentieth century reflects the history of Korean immigration to the United States. In 1940, there were less than 10,000 Korean Americans in the United States. The impact of the post-1965 Korean immigration on the Korean American population growth is remarkable; the number of Koreans rose from 69,551 in 1970 to 377,000 in 1980. In 1985, 542,400 Koreans were reported in the U.S. census. This number represents about eight times the Korean population in the United States in 1970. In fact, more than two-thirds of the Korean men and women reported in the 1980 U.S. census were immigrants who came to the United States after 1970 (Table 1).

#### DEMOGRAPHIC, EDUCATIONAL, AND OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN IMMIGRANTS

Changes in United States immigration policies, combined with the various situations of both sending and receiving societies, had an impact on compositional changes in the flow of Korean immigrants as well as the number of Korean immigrants. Based on the analysis of the 1980 U.S. population census,<sup>9</sup> detailed demographic, educational, and occupational characteristics

<sup>9</sup>Since the U.S. census counted Korean as "others" as late as in the 1960s, the examination of the educational characteristics of immigrants is based on the Public-Use Microdata Samples for 1980. But using this data set to trace the educational levels of Korean immigrants has some limitations. (1) First, because PUMS is prepared for 1980, there are not many turn-of-the-century Korean immigrants alive. Furthermore, immigrant children who arrived in the United States in their early ages might have benefitted from the availability of educational opportunity in the United States. (2) The basic assumption of the method of historical demography is that "there are certain decisions that are made in the late teens and early twenties of one's life, which persist throughout the life-cycle, although there are, of course, people who decide to attend college in the later years of life" (Greeley 1977, p. 75). Thus, for example, if the educational level of the seventy-year-old who arrived before 1950 is "college graduate" in 1980, I will assume that he/she

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1980

	Korean American				All White
	Total	Native <sup>a</sup>	Male	Female	
Nativity Status (%)					
Native-born	18.3	—	21.3	16.1	96.3
Foreign-born					
By Immigration Year					
1975-1980	42.8	—	44.2	41.8	0.4
1970-1974	27.3	—	25.6	28.6	0.3
1965-1969	6.5	—	5.5	7.2	0.3
1960-1964	2.9	—	1.4	4.0	0.3
1950-1959	1.9	—	1.6	2.1	0.8
Before 1950	0.3	—	0.3	0.3	1.6
Total	100.0	—	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age Distribution (%)					
0-9	23.0	61.0	25.4	21.3	13.3
10-19	18.5	19.5	22.1	15.8	16.6
20-29	16.7	6.8	12.4	19.9	17.5
30-39	20.1	4.6	17.7	21.9	14.1
40-49	13.7	2.2	14.7	12.9	10.2
50-59	4.2	2.7	4.2	4.3	11.0
60-69	2.7	2.2	2.5	2.8	9.1
Over 70	1.1	0.6	1.1	1.2	8.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	3,474	636	1,478	1,996	180,392
Mean Age	26	—	—	—	35
Foreign-born	28	—	28	29	52

<sup>a</sup> Includes both males and females.

Source: 1980 U.S. Census of Population Public-Use Microdata Samples, Sample C (one percent file) and Sample A (0.1 percent file).

of Korean immigrants to the United States relating to the time of arrival will be presented.

went to college about fifty years ago. And I will assign him/her to the "college graduate" group for pre-1950 immigrants. Although many people change their occupations in the course of life, a similar assumption is applied to the occupational decision. Particularly in the case of the professional occupations in which Korean Americans are known to be overrepresented, people generally need to make their decisions on occupation early to prepare a proper professional education. "Obviously, such reconstruction is not as satisfactory a method as having survey data that were collected from these immigrants in the [1930s]" (p. 75). But such information is not available and reconstructing the demographic past of immigrant group might be better than relying on impressions or preconceptions. For more on the tools of historical demography, see Greeley (1977, pp. 75-76).

**TABLE 2. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FOREIGN-BORN KOREAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1980**

	Total	Before 1950	1950 -59	1960 -64	1965 -69	1970 -74	1975 -80
% of Female	57.5	55.6	63.1	79.2	63.7	60.1	56.1
% of Citizenship							
Male (N = 1,163)	—	100.0	95.8	85.7	72.0	42.5	7.7
Female (N = 1,675)	—	60.0	87.8	92.5	85.4	48.2	10.1
<b>Regional Distribution</b>							
Northeast	18.9	11.1	15.4	18.8	20.8	18.1	19.4
North Central	18.3	22.2	18.5	23.8	19.0	18.0	18.0
South	21.0	22.2	16.9	22.8	20.8	22.2	20.2
West	41.8	44.4	49.2	34.7	39.4	41.7	42.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>% in Census</b>							
Selected Urban Area	74.7	66.7	56.9	60.4	71.2	74.7	76.9
Male	80.8	25.0	75.0	66.7	81.7	79.9	82.2
Female	70.4	(100.0)	46.3	58.8	65.3	71.3	72.8
<b>Percent Distribution of the Foreign-born Koreans (Age 5 and over) by English Proficiency Status, 1980</b>							
	Male	Female					
Speaks only English	9.7	15.9					
Very well	27.5	22.4					
Well	35.0	32.7					
Not well	24.8	23.0					
Not at all	3.0	6.0					
Total	100.0	100.0					
Number	1,113	1,606					

Source : 1980 U.S. Census of Population Public-Use Microdata Samples, Sample C (one percent file) and Sample A (0.1 percent file).

### *Demographic Characteristics*

As of 1980, the U.S. census records 289,885 persons who were born in Korea (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1984, Table 254, p. 9). Table 1 shows that Koreans in the United States are young compared to whites, partly because of the high proportion of newly arrived immigrants, who tend, in general, to be young. Considering their recency, it is not surprising that more than eighty percent of native-born Koreans are under 20 in 1980. The number of old people, particularly, is quite small.

The changing proportion of females among foreign-born Koreans in 1980 by immigration year also reflects a historical feature of Korean immigration.

Table 2 shows that more Korean women immigrated than Korean men: The Korean women always outnumbered the male immigrants in each period. The proportion female among Korean immigrants peaked during the 1960-1964 period. After the 1965 reform, the proportion female among Korean immigrants continued to decline.

Of the 289,885 foreign-born Koreans in the United States in 1980, 100,198 (34.6%) are naturalized citizens (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1984, Table 254, p. 9). Table 2 presents the percentage of those who held citizenship among the foreign-born persons in 1980 by sex and immigration year. The low percentage of citizenship for the 1975-1980 arrivals is natural because they need to have been residents in the United States for more than five years to qualify for citizenship. However, despite the traditional "family-chain" migration patterns for Koreans as well as for other Asian immigrants, the percentages of females who hold citizenship are greater than the corresponding figures for their male counterparts in certain periods. After 1960, more Korean female immigrants have citizenship than men in every period. Of Korean women who arrived between 1960 and 1964, 92.5% have citizenship. This is the period of the sharp increase in proportion female among Korean immigrants, after the Korean war.

Historically, like other Asians, Korean Americans have been concentrated in the West since they arrived, and recently in large metropolitan areas. In 1980, 41.8% of the foreign-born Korean in the United States reside in the Western states. The second largest concentration of foreign-born Koreans is in the South. Recent Korean immigrants are more likely to reside in the western states. The foreign-born Koreans are disproportionately located in the urban areas; 74.7% of all Korean immigrants reside in a census-defined urban area in 1980. More recent immigrants are more likely to live in urban areas, although substantially smaller proportions of Korean women than men in each period are in urban areas.

In 1980, 56% of the Korean population in the United States are living in homes where all family members speak Korean (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1984, Table 257). 3% of the foreign-born Korean men and 6% of Korean women do not speak English at all. Although the proportion of those who do not speak English at all is higher among women than among men, a higher proportion of foreign-born Korean women than men speak only English.

### *Educational Characteristics of Korean Immigrants*

The superior socioeconomic characteristics of post-1965 Asian immigrants have been widely reported (Pernia 1976; Wong 1986; Wong and Hirschman 1983). However, change in the educational distribution of Korean male im-

migrants shows a somewhat reversed trend. Despite the small scale, pre-1965 Korean immigrants seem to have been even more highly selected than post-1965 Korean immigrants<sup>10</sup>(Table 3). For the Korean male arrivals in the 1965-1969 period, which was the transitional period before the 1965 reform became fully effective, the educational characteristics were somewhat higher than for later arrivals. In contrast to the lack of less educated people among the pre-1965 group, the Korean men who arrived during the period 1970-1974 include 1% who have never attended school, and 1.5% who have not completed elementary school. Compared to the earlier arrivals, a proportion with more than four years of college education declined for the 1970-1974 Korean male immigrants. For the 1975-1980 arrivals, the proportion of the less educated further increased.

Median years of schooling completed for Korean male immigrants of any immigration period are higher than those for white male immigrants of the corresponding period<sup>11</sup> as well as those for native-born white men.

For females, the picture is more uneven.<sup>12</sup> Korean female immigrants during the 1950s and the 1960s do not seem to have been as highly selected as Korean male immigrants of the same periods, although Korean women fare well in comparison with the white female immigrants of the corresponding periods. Korean women who immigrated after 1960 compare well with native-born white women in terms of median grade completed, although the differences are not as impressive as the differences between native-born white men and Korean immigrant men. Korean immigrants of any period, both men and women, include a much higher proportion of those who have completed four or more years of college than among their native-born white counterparts, or than among foreign-born whites of the corresponding immigration period, except for the 1975-1980 group.

Considering the educational characteristics of Koreans in Korea, the educa-

<sup>10</sup>The numbers are too small to conclude anything for the pre-1965 Korean immigrants, but their educational distributions in Table 3 enable us to suspect a high degree of educational selectivity in the early immigration from Korea. Among the four pre-1950 Korean immigrant men in the sample, one has had post-college training; one has a college degree; one is a high school graduate, and the last one has had some high school education. As of 1980, all Korean men who immigrated between 1950 and 1959 had finished at least high school or were enrolled in school. All of the 1960-1964 Korean male immigrants have completed at least high school.

<sup>11</sup>A direct comparison with other group is difficult because the numbers of pre-1965 Korean immigrants in the sample are too small. However, it could suggest the relative educational level for early Korean immigrants.

<sup>12</sup>Among the five Korean women found in the pre-1950 period, two have post-college education, while another two have even finished elementary school and one has finished only elementary school. It suggests that compared to Korean men who immigrated to the United States during the same period, early Korean women arrivals tend to be more polarized in educational characteristics.



**TABLE 3. EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FOREIGN-BORN KOREAN MEN AND WOMEN 25 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER IN THE UNITED STATES BY IMMIGRATION YEAR, 1980**

	Before 1950	1950 -59	1960 -64	1965 -69	1970 -74	1975 -80
<b>Male</b>						
Never Attended	—	—	—	—	1.0	1.6
Less than Elementary	—	—	—	—	1.5	4.1
Elementary Completion	—	—	—	—	—	1.9
Some High School	25.0	—	—	2.9	3.9	5.0
High School Graduate	25.0	9.1	13.3	8.7	16.0	25.2
Some College	—	18.2	6.7	7.2	12.1	11.9
College Graduate	25.0	22.7	20.0	29.0	33.5	28.0
Post College	25.0	45.5	60.0	36.2	23.8	7.2
Now Attending	—	4.5	—	15.9	8.3	15.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
College or over <sup>a</sup> (%)	50.0	72.7	80.0	72.5	62.1	40.9
Foreign-born white	12.9	21.2	25.4	21.8	30.4	41.0
High school or over <sup>a</sup> (%)	75.0	100.0	100.0	97.1	93.7	86.5
Foreign-born white	43.7	66.9	73.1	64.9	66.7	80.8
Median	14.0	16.5	17.5	15.7	15.4	13.7
Foreign-born white	9.4	11.7	11.8	11.5	11.7	13.7
Difference from NBW	2.5	4.8	5.8	4.0	3.7	2.0
Number of Koreans	4	22	15	69	206	318
<b>Female</b>						
Never Attended	—	—	1.6	—	3.2	4.2
Less than Elementary	40.0	18.8	14.3	9.5	9.2	10.6
Elementary Completion	20.0	6.3	7.9	6.7	3.7	2.1
Some High School	—	3.1	14.3	9.5	9.5	9.9
High School Graduate	—	40.6	22.2	34.3	31.7	39.2
Some College	—	6.3	6.3	11.4	12.7	10.8
College Graduate	—	9.4	14.3	14.3	21.1	14.8
Post College	40.0	9.4	14.3	9.5	3.7	2.1
Now Attending	—	6.3	4.8	4.8	5.3	6.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
College or over <sup>a</sup> (%)	40.0	18.8	28.6	24.8	25.6	18.5
Foreign-born white	5.7	11.6	12.9	9.2	20.5	18.8
High school or over <sup>a</sup> (%)	40.0	71.9	61.9	73.3	72.8	72.1
Foreign-born white	41.6	65.8	68.5	65.5	61.5	70.2
Median	7.0	11.1	11.5	11.7	11.7	11.6
Foreign-born white	9.1	11.4	11.5	11.4	11.4	11.7
Difference from NBW	-4.5	-0.4	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1
Number of Koreans	5	32	63	105	379	426

<sup>a</sup> Figures are somewhat higher than the figures which can be obtained from the above, because figures include the people who are currently enrolled in school as of 1980.

NBW : Native-born white.

College or over : % with more than 4 years of college education among the population.

High school or over : % with more than 4 years of high school education among the population.

Median : Median years of schooling completed.

Source : 1980 U.S. Census of Population Public-Use Microdata Samples, Sample C (one percent file) and Sample A (0.1 percent file).

tional selectivity of pre-1965 Korean immigrants is even more remarkable.<sup>13</sup> In 1956, 73.5% of Koreans in Korea had less than primary education; only 1.5% had a higher education. In 1980, 20.9% of the population in Korea had no schooling; only 8.9% had post-secondary education. In 1955, 12.6% of the male population in Korea were illiterate; in 1960, 9.9%; and in 1970, 5.6% (Table 4).

In sum, Korean immigrants, both men and women, have been educationally a very highly selected group. The superior educational level became more pronounced if compared to the educational distribution of the general U. S. population<sup>14</sup> rather than that of white immigrants. After all, white immigrants have also been educationally a very selected group throughout the period.<sup>15</sup>

### *Occupational Characteristics of Korean Immigrants*

Table 5 indicates a slight occupational advantage in 1980 for Korean male immigrants over white male immigrants.<sup>16</sup> The numbers of the pre-1965 Korean male immigrants in the sample are too small to be directly compared with white immigrants, but it seems that Korean immigrants fare well relative to white immigrants of the corresponding period in terms of the proportion of professional or white collar workers. For the 1965-1969 and 1970-1974 groups, Korean male immigrants continue to fare better than white male immigrants in terms of the proportion of professionals, executive managers, and white collar workers. Considering the downward employment of immigrants on arrival (Chiswick 1979, 1982, 1983), the less obvious occupational advantage of the Korean immigrant men of the 1975-1980 period seems natural.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Although the educational profiles of Korean female immigrants are less impressive than those of Korean male immigrants, Korean women who immigrated to the United States are also a very selected population of their society. In 1956, 84.9% of Korean women in Korea had less than primary education; only 0.3% had received higher education. In 1980, 28.5% still had experienced no schooling; only 3.9% had received post-secondary education. In 1955, 33.3% of Korean women in Korea were illiterate; in 1960, 25.8%; and in 1971, 19.0% (Table 4).

<sup>14</sup>In 1950, 11.1% of the population in the U.S. had gotten less than a primary school education; only 6.2% had higher education. In 1960, 8.3% had less than a primary education and 7.7% had higher education. In 1981, 3.3% had no schooling and only 32.2% had post-secondary education (Table 4).

<sup>15</sup>Chiswick (1982, p. 119) notes that "U.S. immigration policy has historically been based primarily on the premise that immigrants have a favorable impact on the country's economic development."

<sup>16</sup>Because the occupational distribution reported here is based on the occupations in which foreign-born Korean and white men are engaged in 1980, it only suggests the relative position in the occupational hierarchy for Korean and white immigrant men.

<sup>17</sup>During the 1975-1980 period, Korean male immigrants compare poorly to white immigrants not only because the Korean immigrants include a smaller proportion of professionals, executive managers and other white-collar workers than earlier Korean arrivals, but also because white men who immigrated during the 1975-1980 period have a higher proportion of professionals, executive managers and other white-collar employees than earlier white immigrants.

**TABLE 4 (a). PERCENT ILLITERATE AMONG ADULTS IN KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES**

Country	Year	Age Group	Percentage Illiterate in the Adult Population		
			Total	Male	Female
U.S.	1950	14+	3.2	3.6	2.9
		14+	2.2	2.5	1.8
	1959	Urban	1.7	1.8	1.7
		Rural	4.3	5.6	2.9
	1979	14+	0.5	—	—
Korea	1955	15+	23.2	12.6	33.3
		15+	12.4	5.6	19.0
	1970	Urban	5.7	2.0	9.3
		Rural	17.8	5.5	26.6

Source : UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1963, 1983, 1984; World Bank, *World Table*, Third ed., Vol. II, 1983.

**TABLE 4 (b). PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION 25 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER IN KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES BY LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Country	Year	Sex	Less than		Higher			Total
			Primary	Primary	Secondary	Education	Unknown	
U.S.	1950	MF	11.1	54.6	28.1	6.2	2.8	100.0
		F	10.0	54.0	30.9	5.2	2.4	100.0
	1960	MF	8.3	50.6	33.4	7.7	—	100.0
		F	7.4	50.1	36.7	5.8	—	100.0
Korea	1956	MF	73.5	18.2	6.8	1.5	—	100.0
		F	84.9	12.2	2.6	0.3	—	100.0

  

Country	Year	Sex	No	Primary		Enter	Post	Total
			Schooling	I	C	Secondary	Secondary	
U. S.	1979	MF	3.5	—	65.4	—	31.1	100.0
		F	3.2	—	69.9	—	26.9	100.0
	1981	MF	3.3	—	64.6	—	32.2	100.0
		F	3.1	—	68.8	—	28.0	100.0
Korea	1980	MF	20.9	34.5	—	35.8	8.9	100.0
		F	28.5	39.1	—	28.6	3.9	100.0

M : Male, F : Female, I : Incomplete, C : Completed.

"Unknown" : as percent of total population 25 years and over.

Source : UNESCO, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1963, 1983, 1984; World Bank, *World Table*, Third ed., Vol. II, 1983.

TABLE 5. OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FOREIGN-BORN KOREAN AND WHITE MEN IN THE UNITED STATES BY IMMIGRATION YEAR, 1980<sup>a</sup>

	Before 1950	1950 -59	1960 -64	1965 -69	1970 -74	1975 -80
<b>Korean</b>						
White Collar	(100.0)	73.9	73.7	79.4	61.1	43.8
Executive manager	50.0	13.0	15.8	23.5	13.8	9.7
Professional	50.0	43.5	42.1	26.5	20.2	8.5
Technical worker	—	4.3	5.3	13.2	5.7	4.8
Sales worker	—	4.3	5.3	16.2	15.8	13.4
Administrative support	—	8.7	5.3	—	5.7	7.4
Manual Worker	—	26.1	26.3	19.1	37.2	54.5
Service worker	—	4.3	5.3	8.8	10.5	13.1
Craft worker	—	17.4	10.5	2.9	10.9	15.1
Operative, laborer	—	4.3	10.5	7.3	15.8	26.4
Farm Worker	—	—	—	1.5	1.6	1.7
Number	2	23	19	68	247	352
Labor Force						
Participation Rate <sup>b</sup>	50.0	91.7	85.7	86.7	77.8	73.8
Unemployment Rate <sup>c</sup>	—	—	—	7.7	2.3	4.2
<b>White</b>						
White Collar	48.9	43.2	45.7	41.5	38.2	52.4
Executive manager	15.3	15.2	12.5	12.2	10.2	13.6
Professional	12.6	11.4	12.1	13.5	16.7	19.8
Technical worker	1.9	3.2	4.3	2.2	2.7	4.8
Sales worker	12.4	5.9	9.9	9.2	6.5	7.7
Administrative support	6.6	7.4	6.9	4.4	2.2	6.6
Manual Worker	48.4	55.4	53.0	56.3	59.7	45.1
Service worker	10.4	9.2	6.0	13.0	16.1	11.7
Craft worker	21.6	27.0	26.3	17.9	18.3	16.5
Operative, laborer	16.4	19.2	20.7	25.4	25.3	16.8
Farm Worker	2.7	1.3	1.3	2.2	2.2	2.6
Number	587	525	232	229	186	273
Labor Force						
Participation Rate <sup>b</sup>	31.7	80.2	82.6	84.5	82.7	68.0
Unemployment Rate <sup>c</sup>	5.3	4.9	6.1	7.7	4.2	3.9

<sup>a</sup> It indicates all persons for whom an occupation is reported in the 1980 Public-Use Microdata Samples. The bottom row shows the labor force participation rate for all foreign-born Korean men 16 years of age and over.

<sup>b</sup> For men 16 years of age and over. Figures exclude those in the armed forces and those not in the labor force.

<sup>c</sup> For men 16 years of age and over. % unemployment among those in the U.S. labor force. —Means zero.

Source : 1980 U.S. Census of Population Public-Use Microdata Samples, Sample C (one percent file) and Sample A (0.1 percent file).

In general, all Korean immigrant groups have higher educational and occupational profiles than the white immigrant groups of corresponding immigration period. It is well known that the socioeconomic composition of post-1965 Korean immigrants has been exceptionally strong. But this fact has its roots in the pre-1965 period; evidence based on the analysis of 1980 Public-Use Microdata Samples data suggests a high-level educational and occupational composition of Korean immigrants even before the 1965 reform.

## EDUCATION, OCCUPATION, AND INCOME STATUS OF KOREAN AMERICANS IN 1980

### *Educational Status in 1980*

Table 6 confirms what is commonly believed about educational prominence of Korean Americans. In 1980, Korean Americans 25 years old and over, both men and women, both native-born and foreign-born, record more median years of schooling, and include a larger proportion of college graduates and over, as well as a higher proportion of high school graduates or over, than white counterparts. The educational level of the Korean men in the United States is particularly impressive. The proportions of those attending school among those 25 years of age and over are also impressive for Korean men and women. Since those who are attending school after age 25 are more likely to be pursuing higher education, the higher education figures will likely be increased.

By all three traditional indicators of educational level, Korean Americans, particularly men, are indeed the well educated Americans. However, at the same time, both Korean men and women, include a higher proportion of those who have never attended school than among their white counterparts. Korean women fare even more poorly. Korean women's 3.0% falls even behind black women's 1.2%. The proportion of those who have not finished elementary school also indicates the polarized educational characteristics of Korean women. Controlling for nativity status, the foreign-born Korean men and women fare better than their U.S.-born counterparts in terms of median grades completed and the proportion with more than college education. This might be partly because the native-born Koreans are still young and they will undoubtedly accumulate more education.

### *Occupational Status in 1980*

How do Korean Americans fare occupationally compared to whites in 1980? Occupational distribution will be discussed only for men 25 to 64 years old as shown in Table 7. In 1980, 61.4% of the employed Korean men are in

**TABLE 6. EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KOREAN, WHITE, AND BLACK MEN AND WOMEN 25 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER IN THE UNITED STATES BY SEX AND NATIVITY STATUS, 1980**

	Korean			White			Black
	Total	NB	FB	Total	NB	FB	Total
<b>Male</b>							
Median	15.1	13.5	15.1	11.6	11.7	11.3	11.0
High School or over <sup>a</sup> (%)	89.9	78.6	90.7	70.7	71.3	57.6	50.8
College or over <sup>a</sup> (%)	52.4	38.1	53.3	22.0	22.1	20.2	8.2
Never Attended	1.0	—	1.1	0.5	0.4	2.6	1.7
Less than Elementary	2.5	2.4	2.5	7.4	6.9	16.7	19.5
Elementary Completion	0.9	—	0.9	6.6	6.4	11.6	4.6
Some High School	5.2	19.0	4.3	14.6	14.8	11.1	22.6
High School Graduate	19.4	16.7	19.6	30.1	30.5	22.6	26.9
Some College	12.0	19.0	11.5	16.5	16.7	12.5	12.5
College Graduate	28.6	14.3	29.5	9.8	9.9	7.8	3.9
Post College	18.5	19.0	18.5	10.6	10.6	10.4	3.4
Now Attending	12.0	9.5	12.1	3.8	3.8	4.8	5.0
Grade attending							
7-12	3.7	—	3.9	4.5	4.0	9.8	17.0
1-4 college	51.8	50.0	52.0	56.1	56.6	49.6	66.1
5+ college	44.4	50.0	44.2	39.7	39.6	40.7	16.6
Number	676	42	634	51,700	49,150	2,550	5,739
<b>Female</b>							
Median	11.6	11.6	11.6	11.5	11.5	11.1	11.0
High School or over <sup>a</sup> (%)	71.9	75.0	71.7	69.1	70.0	53.6	51.0
College or over <sup>a</sup> (%)	22.4	19.6	22.6	13.7	13.9	9.4	7.7
Never Attended	3.0	1.8	3.1	0.5	0.4	2.9	1.2
Less than Elementary	10.4	7.1	10.6	6.7	6.0	17.9	16.9
Elementary Completion	3.6	—	3.8	7.1	6.7	12.8	5.6
Some High School	10.0	16.1	9.7	16.4	16.7	12.5	24.2
High School Graduate	34.9	39.3	34.7	37.5	37.9	30.5	28.0
Some College	11.3	14.3	11.1	15.6	15.9	11.7	11.9
College Graduate	16.5	10.7	16.8	7.4	7.5	4.8	3.8
Post College	4.8	7.1	4.7	5.2	5.2	4.2	3.1
Now Attending	5.5	3.6	5.6	3.6	3.7	2.7	5.3
Grade attending							
7-12	20.4	—	21.1	6.0	7.7	10.0	20.3
1-4 college	59.3	50.0	59.6	62.6	62.1	75.3	64.5
5+ college	20.4	50.0	19.4	31.5	32.1	14.5	15.1
Number	1,066	56	1,010	58,421	55,128	3,293	7,280

NB : Native-born, FB: Foreign-born.

Median : Median Years of Schooling Completed.

<sup>a</sup> Figures are somewhat higher than the figures which can be obtained from the below, because <sup>a</sup> figures include the people who are currently enrolled in school as of 1980.

High School or over : % with more than 4 years of high school education among the population  
College or over : % with more than 4 years of college education among the population

Source : 1980 U.S. Census of Population Public-Use Microdata Samples, Sample C (one percent file) and Sample A (0.1 percent file)

**TABLE 7. OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION, INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURE, WORKER CLASSIFICATION, AND INCOME STATUS OF EMPLOYED KOREAN MEN 25 TO 64 YEARS OF AGE, UNITED STATES, 1980**

	Korean			White		
	Total	NB	FB	Total	NB	FB
<b>Occupation (%)</b>						
White Collar	61.4	67.5	60.7	48.8	48.8	49.7
Executive manager	15.8	21.6	15.3	15.8	15.8	16.2
Professional	20.0	21.6	19.9	13.5	13.4	16.1
Technical worker	6.4	5.4	6.4	3.3	3.3	3.6
Sales worker	14.2	16.2	14.0	9.9	10.0	7.7
Administrative support	5.0	2.7	5.1	6.3	6.3	6.1
Service Worker	6.9	5.4	7.0	6.2	6.1	8.3
Farm Worker	1.6	2.7	1.5	3.6	3.7	1.4
Craft Worker	12.7	10.8	12.9	22.0	21.9	22.9
Operative, Laborers	17.5	13.5	17.8	19.4	19.4	17.6
<b>Industry (%)</b>						
Agriculture & Mining	11.4	2.7	11.3	5.6	5.8	2.2
Construction	1.9	2.7	1.9	9.4	9.4	10.6
Manufacturing	26.2	18.9	26.7	27.9	27.8	30.8
Transportation	4.8	10.8	4.4	10.5	10.5	8.7
Wholesale Trade	5.7	5.4	5.7	5.8	5.8	4.9
Retail Trade	23.0	13.5	23.7	10.5	10.4	13.0
Business & Finance	10.0	13.5	9.9	9.6	9.6	9.8
Personal Service	4.6	—	4.9	1.3	1.2	2.0
Entertainment	0.7	—	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.2
Professional	19.5	29.7	18.8	12.5	12.5	13.3
Public Administration	2.1	2.7	2.1	6.1	6.2	3.5
Experienced Unemployment	0.3	—	0.3	0.2	0.2	—
<b>Class of Worker (%)</b>						
Private Wage	66.5	75.7	65.9	69.3	69.2	73.7
Government Worker	9.0	8.1	9.1	15.4	15.6	9.3
Self-Employed	18.4	13.5	18.8	11.1	11.1	10.8
Employee of Own Corp.	5.3	2.7	5.5	3.9	3.9	6.0
Unpaid Family Worker	0.7	—	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.2
<b>Income in 1979 (%)</b>						
No income	3.0	2.7	3.0	0.5	0.5	0.7
Under \$5,000	10.8	13.5	10.6	5.2	5.1	55.7
\$5,000-9,999	18.8	13.5	19.1	10.1	10.1	11.2
\$10,000-24,999	43.9	40.5	44.1	57.4	57.6	50.8
\$25,000-49,999	17.7	18.9	17.6	22.4	22.3	25.4
\$50,000 or more	5.8	10.8	5.5	4.4	4.4	6.2
<b>Median Income in 1979 (\$)</b>	14,045	15,880	14,008	18,310	18,290	19,300
Number	565	37	528	36,121	34,804	1,317
% in labor force <sup>a</sup>	76.4	70.5	77.0	74.4	75.1	59.0
% unemployment <sup>b</sup>	3.9	7.3	3.6	5.9	5.9	5.3

NB : Native-born, FB : Foreign-born.

<sup>a</sup> For men 16 years of age and over. Figures exclude those in the armed forces and those not in the labor force.

<sup>b</sup> For men 16 years of age and over, % unemployment among those in the U.S. labor force. Source : 1980 U.S. Census of Population Public-Use Microdata Samples, Sample C (one percent file) and Sample A (0.1 percent file).

white-collar occupations, compared to 48.8% for white men; more than one-third of the employed Korean men are employed as professionals or executive managers; a greater proportion of Korean men are employed as professionals than are white men, regardless of nativity status. It is also noticeable that white men have more executive managers than professionals, while Korean men tend to have more professionals than executive managers. Korean men, both native-born and foreign-born, are also concentrated in sales jobs. However, Koreans are less likely than whites to be in skilled blue-collar jobs, traditionally closed to all Asian workers. The basic patterns of occupational advantage and disadvantage relative to whites are reflected in the industrial composition; Korean men have an employment structure with higher proportions in professional and sales occupations than white men; the proportion of Korean men in retail trade is greater among foreign-borns than among native-borns, maybe due to their lack of cultural assimilation and English language disadvantage. Foreign-born Korean men also include a higher proportion in experienced unemployment category than whites as well as native-born Korean men. Considering the disadvantage from immigration, it is observable that no foreign-born white men were found in the experienced unemployment category. Worker classification characteristics show that the proportion of self-employed workers is larger among Koreans than among whites regardless of nativity status and the proportion of government workers is relatively small, compared to that of whites.

#### *Income Status in 1979*

Despite the high educational level and somewhat positive occupational position, disadvantage in income level is obvious for Korean Americans in Table 7. In 1979, median income for the employed Korean men was \$14,045, only 77% of the level for whites. Income distribution of Korean men was somewhat polarized relative to that of whites.

Since Koreans include a large proportion foreign-born, higher proportions of Korean men in the low income brackets could signify a temporary depression in earnings for the immigrants (Chiswick 1977, 1979, 1980). However, controlling nativity status does not seem to change much of the picture. Considering the high educational level of both native-born and foreign-born Korean men, income return to investment in education does not seem to be as high for Koreans as for whites.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup>High earning power of foreign-born white men is noteworthy; foreign-born white men showed a higher median income and included a larger proportion at the high income levels (over \$25,000) than native-born white men. Considering the cultural, linguistic, and legal advantages accrued to the native-born status in the labor market, this pattern is noticeable.



In sum, regardless of nativity status, Korean Americans are significantly disadvantaged in income. It seems that there is no one monolithic factor, whether it is discrimination or the cost of immigration. Historically, Koreans have been concentrated in their own ethnic enclave economies (Light 1984, 1985). The disadvantage stemming from the occupational and industrial concentration of Korean men in small businesses in the ethnic economy might in part cause earning disadvantage (Broom and Riemer 1973; Glick 1980; Hsia 1988).

### *Education, Occupation, and Income in 1980*

Considering the large proportion of Korean men with higher education and with professional occupations, Korean men's income disadvantage is even more serious (Tables 8 and 9).

In general, it is natural that only by being better educated can the foreign-born belong to the same occupational category. Korean Americans, both native-born and foreign-born, are better educated than their white counterparts for the same occupational group, if we can assume that there is no ethnic difference in the specific occupational distributions with the same major occupational groups. However, Table 8 clearly shows the lower median income level for Koreans than for white counterparts in the same occupation for all three major occupational categories as well as for the professional occupations. By controlling educational level, low income return to education for Koreans is more obvious. In every educational level, Korean men earned less than whites regardless of nativity status.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, for all educational levels, foreign-born whites had a higher median income than native-born whites with the same educational level. For white immigrants, the cost of immigration does not seem to exist regardless of their educational qualification. In sum, the smaller income return to education for Korean Americans is evident as compared to whites, sometimes even to blacks.

The educational superiority of Korean men is most prominent in the highly educated category of those who have completed four years of college and over (Table 6). Table 9 presents the occupational and income distribution of those highly educated men. It is natural that the proportions of professionals and white-collar workers in Table 9 are higher than the corresponding figures

<sup>19</sup>The earning disadvantage for Korean Americans, relative to whites, is somewhat different by educational level. The income disadvantage of high school graduates is greater than that of elementary school graduates; for Korean Americans, high school graduates earned 61% of whites' at the same educational level, while elementary school graduates earned 73% of corresponding whites. For high school graduates, the median income of Korean men fell even behind black men's. For college graduates and over, native-born Korean Americans also earned less than native-born blacks.

**TABLE 8. EDUCATION, OCCUPATION, AND INCOME STATUS OF EMPLOYED KOREAN, WHITE, AND BLACK MEN 25 TO 64 YEARS OF AGE, UNITED STATES, 1980**

		Educational and Income Status by Major Occupational Groupings					
Occupation		Median Years of Schooling			Median Income		
Race		Total	N	F	Total	N	F
<b>Professional</b>							
Korean		17.6	18.5	17.6	20,685	16,258 <sup>b</sup>	21,005
White		16.5	16.5	17.3	21,650	21,545	24,020
<b>White Collar</b>							
Korean		15.6	15.5	15.6	16,183	19,245	16,005
White		14.6	14.5	15.1	21,005	20,910	23,048
<b>Manual</b>							
Korean		12.4	12.0 <sup>c</sup>	12.8	11,988	11,965 <sup>c</sup>	12,005
White		11.4	11.4	11.2	16,510	16,510	16,490
<b>Farm</b>							
Korean		11.0 <sup>b</sup>	16.0 <sup>a</sup>	10.0 <sup>b</sup>	5,010 <sup>b</sup>	3,905 <sup>a</sup>	7,008 <sup>b</sup>
White		11.4	11.4	9.5	11,188	11,135	18,005 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Race</b>		<b>Median Income by Years of Schooling Completed</b>					
<b>Nativity</b>		<b>Median Income</b>			<b>Ratio to White Counterpart</b>		
<b>Median Years</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16<sup>+</sup></b>
Korean		10,755	11,005	16,510	73	61	72
NB		—	11,978	16,258	—	67	71
FB		10,755	11,005	16,515	60(74)	61(61)	66(72)
White		14,805	17,975	23,043	100	100	100
NB		14,505	17,938	23,010	100	100	100
FB		18,005	18,160	25,005	100(124)	100(101)	100(109)
Black		10,205	12,583	16,210	69	70	70
NB		10,158	12,785	16,505	70	71	72
FB		10,505	11,005	12,088	58(72)	61(61)	48(53)

Median Years : Median years of schooling completed.

NB : Native-born, FB : Foreign-born.

<sup>a</sup> Less than 5 cases, <sup>b</sup> Less than 10 cases, <sup>c</sup> Less than 25 cases.

16<sup>+</sup> : 16 years of schooling or over.

Figures in ( ) are ratio to native-born whites.

Source : 1980 U.S. Census of Population Public-Use Microdata Samples, Sample C (one percent file) and Sample A (0.1 percent file).

in Table 7 for Koreans and whites, respectively. However, the discrepancies for Korean men are less than those for whites. Some occupational advantage

**TABLE 9. OCCUPATIONAL AND INCOME DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED KOREAN AND WHITE MEN 25 TO 64 YEARS OF AGE WITH MORE THAN FOUR YEARS OF COLLEGE EDUCATION, UNITED STATES, 1980**

	Korean			White		
	Total	NB	FB	Total	NB	FB
<b>Occupation</b>						
White Collar (%)	75	71	46	68	68	68
Executive manager	18	36	17	29	29	23
Professional	29	36	29	39	39	45
Technical Worker	6	—	7	3	3	5
Sales Worker	16	21	16	12	12	10
Administrative Support	5	—	5	5	5	4
Service Worker	3	—	3	3	3	3
Farm Worker	1	7	1	2	2	—
Craft Worker	10	—	11	6	5	6
Operative, Laborers	11	—	11	3	2	4
<b>Income in 1979 (%)</b>						
No Income	2	—	3	0	0	0
Less than \$5,000	8	7	8	3	3	6
\$5,000-9,999	14	14	14	6	6	6
\$10,000-24,999	43	43	43	44	45	33
\$25,000-49,999	24	14	24	35	35	40
\$50,000 or more	9	21	8	11	11	15
Number	291	14	277	8,922	8,574	348

NB : Native-born, FB: Foreign-born.

Source : 1980 U.S. Census of Population Public-Use Microdata Samples, Sample C (one percent file) and Sample A (0.1 percent file).

of Koreans over whites (a higher proportion of professional workers) found in Table 7 disappeared. And a higher proportion of the highly educated Korean men (mostly foreign-born) are employed as craft workers, operative workers, or laborers than that of whites. Although all employed Korean men between 25 and 64 included a higher proportion in the \$50,000 or more than whites (Table 7), for those with a college degree or more, white men included a far higher proportion in the high income category than Koreans.<sup>20</sup> Table 9 also shows the substantial concentration of highly educated Korean immigrants into the small-business sector (“sales worker”).

In sum, Korean Americans are better educated for the same occupation, but experience a lower income return to the same education and the same

<sup>20</sup>Although the number of cases is too small to conclude anything for native-born Korean men, those in the “no income” category disappeared; but a proportion in the less than \$10,000 categories is still higher than for the corresponding whites.

occupation than white Americans.

## CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to describe the various demographic, social, and economic characteristics of Korean Americans in the United States. The changes in U.S. immigration policies combined with the various situations in Korea and the United States are reflected in compositional changes in the flow of Korean immigrants as well as in the changes in the number of immigrants. The changing proportion female and percentage of naturalized citizens among foreign-born Koreans by immigration year, and the less prominent educational level of Korean female immigrants than that of Korean male immigrants all partially reflect historical features of Korean immigration.

Large numbers of Korean immigrants since 1965 have caused rapid growth of the Korean population in the United States. In 1980, more than two-thirds of the Korean men and women in the U.S. are post-1965 immigrants, known as the highly selected immigrant group. But the selective characteristics of Korean immigration seem to have its roots in the pre-1965 period. The evidence based on the analysis of 1980 PUMS suggests an even higher educational profile for pre-1965 Korean immigrants, particularly males, although caution is necessary in this interpretation because of the small number of cases in the sample. Despite the small number, they were a very selected group from their society. They were very often students, intellectuals or political refugees, who were more likely to represent the higher levels of their society in terms of educational and occupational status.

How, then, do these Korean immigrants and their native-born descendants fare relative to whites in terms of socioeconomic status? In 1980, the educational level of Korean Americans regardless of nativity status is indeed higher than that of whites as claimed in most of the previous statistics and as represented in their public image. The educational prominence of Korean men is particularly impressive. However, Korean Americans also include a higher proportion of the uneducated than white counterparts. This polarization in educational distribution seems stronger among Korean women.

In the occupational hierarchy, Korean men fare well relative to whites in terms of the proportion in white-collar occupations and the proportion of professional workers. However, a substantial proportion of Korean men in sales jobs, retail trade, self-employed sector suggests a concentration of Korean men in small businesses in the ethnic enclave economy. Although Korean men were above white men in educational status and fare well on the occupational dimensions, Korean men are severely disadvantaged in income status regardless of nativity status; the median income of Korean men was

only 77% of white's.

By being better educated, Korean Americans could enjoy some occupational advantage over whites in terms of proportions employed as professional workers and white-collar workers. However, with educational level controlled, some occupational advantage of Korean men over whites disappears and the income disadvantage becomes even more serious. Korean Americans are better educated for the same occupation, but experience a far lower income return to the same education and the same occupation than white Americans.

In sum, based on the analysis of 1980 PUMS, this study has found that Korean men immigrated to the United States with considerably more "human capital" than white men, but Korean immigrants as well as native-born Korean Americans are less successful than white immigrants in getting a job and particularly in earning income. The underemployment and underpayment patterns and an explanation of them deserve a further study. It is clear that there is no one monolithic factor. There is certainly some cost of "being Korean" in the labor market. The large proportion of recent arrivals among Korean Americans tends to depress returns to education because of the inevitable difficulty of transferring skills on arrival, such as language, citizenship, and licensing problems. The number of years since immigration is one of important determinants of immigrant occupation and income (Chiswick 1977, 1982). The low income of Korean Americans may also result from their predominance in the ethnic enclave economy. The substantial concentration of Korean Americans, even among the highly educated, into the small business sector should be taken into account to make a valid assessment of the cost of immigration or the cost of being Korean in explaining low occupational and income return to education.

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