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Intergenerational Transmission of Religion and Culture: Korean Protestants in the U.S.

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This paper systematically examines the extent to which Korean Protestant immigrants in the United States have transmitted their religion and cultural traditions through religion. It is based on a survey of 1.5- and 2nd-generation Korean American adults and a survey of Korean English-language congregations in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area. Previous studies reveal that the majority of Korean immigrants are affiliated with a Korean Protestant church and that their frequent participation in it enables them to preserve Korean cultural traditions. Results of our survey show that Korean Protestant immigrants are highly successful in transmitting their church-oriented style of Protestantism to the second generation. Approximately two-thirds of 1.5- and 2nd-generation Korean American adults who attended a Protestant church during their childhood were found to participate in a Protestant congregation regularly, with more than two-thirds of them going to a Korean congregation. Moreover, they also participate in a congregation as frequently as Korean immigrants. However, our study shows that Korean Protestant immigrants have failed to transmit their cultural traditions through religion. Korean English-language congregations for 1.5- and 2nd-generation Korean American Protestants have almost entirely eliminated Korean cultural components from worship services and other socio-cultural activities. Transmitting Korean cultural traditions through religion is difficult for Korean Protestant immigrants partly because there is a great dissociation between Korean Protestantism and Korean secular culture and partly because second-generation Korean American Protestants have embraced the white American evangelical subculture. Based on these findings, we argue that transmitting a religion does not necessarily help to transmit ethnic culture and ethnic identity unless there is a strong correlation between the two.

Many studies of earlier Judeo-Christian white immigrant groups to the United States emphasized religion as the most important cultural mechanism for ethnic preservation (Greeley 1972; Handlin 1951; Herberg 1960; Warner 1993, 1994; Warner and Srole 1945). As Herberg (1960:28-29) elaborated in his sem-

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inal book, religion was transmitted to the third and later generations and became an important source of their ethnic identity, while language and other ethnic customs hardly survived even in the second generation. Herberg and other researchers indicated that white ethnic groups had effectively used religion as an ethnic marker largely because the United States sanctioned religious pluralism.

Post-1965, heavily Third World immigrants, by contrast, are comprised of many non-Christian—Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and Sikh—groups, as well as Christian groups. Many studies of contemporary immigrants’ religious experiences have applied the same theoretical perspective as used in the studies of earlier Judeo-Christian immigrant groups, and, similarly, have found positive effects of religion on ethnic retention (Bankston and Zhou 1995; Carnes and Yang 2004; Chen 2002; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Iwamura and Spickard 2003; Min 1992; Warner and Wittner 1998; Williams 1988). These studies suggest that because of the strong emphasis on multiculturalism in contemporary America, non-Christian immigrant groups may be able to use their respective religions as ethnic identifiers more effectively than Christian immigrant groups. Several studies have argued that precisely because of their differences from mainstream Americans, Buddhist, Hindu, and other non-Christian immigrant groups are better equipped than Christian groups to employ their religion to represent their ethnic culture and ethnic identity (Chen 2002; Kurien 1998; Williams 1988; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). For example, in her comparative study of a Chinese Buddhist temple and a Chinese evangelical church, Chen (2002:233) comments: “By virtue of the association of Buddhism with the Far East and Christianity with the West, the Buddhists, rather than the Christians, are the ones to be recruited and courted as the Chinese representatives at the multicultural table.”

Asian or Middle Eastern Protestant immigrants who were part of a religious minority in their country of origin will find it even easier to practise Christianity in the United States because Christians constitute the religious mainstream. However, when it comes to preserving their ethnic culture and identity through religion, they will have more difficulty because the Protestant religion is not synonymous with their home country and ethnic culture. Yet Protestant immigrants can maintain ethnic culture fairly successfully by engaging in active religious practice and participation in ethnic congregations. The greatest challenge for Protestant immigrants lies in transmitting their ethnic cultures to the second generation because second-generation Protestants are more likely to question a host of Christian religious practices that are embedded in ethnic cultural traditions.

Most Korean immigrants are affiliated with and actively participate in Korean Protestant churches (Hurh and Kim 1990; Kim and Kim 2001; Min 1992). Yet, Protestants remain “a numerical minority group” in South Korea.¹

¹We like to emphasize Protestants in South Korea as “a numerical minority group” because Protestants have not suffered discrimination as a minority religious group. Korea,
constituting less than 20% of the population (Korea National Statistical Office 2002:538). Moreover, because of its short history, the Korean version of Protestantism has not incorporated elements of Korean folk culture, such as holidays, food, dress, music and dance, except for Confucian and shamanistic cultural traditions (Baker 1997; Kim 2000). Thus, Korean Protestants in the United States, a numerical minority religious group in the country of origin that has become part of the religious mainstream in the host society, serve as a good case for examining the intergenerational transmission of ethnic culture through religion.

Both Korean Protestant immigrants and ethnic churches have received a great deal of scholarly attention (Hurh and Kim 1990; J. Kim 1996; A. R. Kim 1996; Kwon, Kim and Warner 2001; Min 1992, 2000; Shin and Park 1988). These studies reveal that Korean Protestant immigrants attend a Korean church with exceptional frequency and that they preserve Korean cultural traditions and ethnic networks through their active participation in ethnic congregations. Several ethnographic studies of second-generation Korean English-language congregations also suggest that second-generation Korean American churches are heavily evangelical, and that their Christian identity supersedes their Korean ethnic identity (Alumkal 1999, 2001; Chai 1998, 2001; Chong 1998; Kim 2003; Park 2001). However, there is no survey study that documents the proportion of second-generation Korean adults’ affiliation with and frequency of participation in a Korean congregation. Also, there are no survey data that indicate how well second-generation Korean English-language congregations retain Korean cultural traditions in worship services and other socio-cultural activities.

Using two sets of survey data collected in New York, this paper examines the intergenerational transmission of religion and culture among Korean American Protestants. The first section investigates what proportion of 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans who participated in a Korean Protestant church during their childhood have maintained their religion as adults. The second section analyzes the extent to which second-generation Korean English-language congregations retain Korean cultural traditions. This study is significant for two

unlike India or the Philippines, has not historically experienced a serious political, regional or social conflict based on religious differences.

Although American missionaries brought Protestantism to Korea at the end of the nineteenth century, it was not popularized in South Korea until the 1970s. In 1962, Protestants composed only 2.8% of the population in South Korea (Park and Cho 1995:119).

We define second-generation Korean Americans as those who were born in the United States with at least one parent who was born in Korea. By 1.5, we refer to those who were born in Korea and came to the United States by age 12 or younger with at least one Korean-born parent. We chose 12 because that age reflects a substantial upbringing in the United States. Unless we make distinctions between the two, the term second-generation Korean Americans includes the 1.5ers.
main reasons. First, it is theoretically significant because it specifies the mechanism that facilitates the preservation of ethnic culture through religion. Second, it is substantively significant because it provides the two survey data sets, each of which measures the magnitude of second-generation Korean American Protestants' retention of their childhood religion or the extent of second-generation Korean congregations' retention of ethnic culture.

DATA SOURCES

Two major data sources serve as the basis for our argument. First, a closed-ended telephone survey with 200 23-35 year-old 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area, conducted by the second author in 1998. This data provides information about religious affiliations and participation in a religious institution. The survey relied on a random sample of 20 prominent Korean surnames included in the 1997 public telephone directories in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan boroughs and counties to target Korean households and screen for eligible 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans. This procedure produced a total of 24,000 potential Korean households, out of which 3,500 households were randomly generated for telephone screening. Telephone contact attempts were made to 2,631 households with 20 prominent Korean surnames. More than two-thirds (1,834) of households were reached by telephone. However, two-thirds of those households (1,213) were not screened because they did not either pass the ethnicity test or refused the screener. Out of 623 households that were successfully screened, 418 Korean households were found to be ineligible for the telephone interview because there were no eligible 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans in the household or because those present did not meet the age criteria. The second author and a graduate student successfully interviewed 202 1.5-generation and U.S-born second-generation young adults, 23-35 years old. Approximately 72 of the second-generation interviewees lived with parents, 92 were on their own (alone, married, or with roommates), and 38 lived away—those second-generation interviewees were found through screened parents. The questionnaire included 108 items about 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans' socioeconomic adjustment. Four questions were related to their religious experiences.

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4As a rough proxy for metropolitan New York-New Jersey boroughs and counties, Korean surnames were obtained from the following area codes: New York- 718, 212, 516, 914; New Jersey- 201, 908, 973.

5Seventy percent of the respondents were 1.5-generation Koreans, while 30% were U.S.-born second-generation Koreans.

6That means the proportion of second-generation households is roughly 15% or 92/623.
Although the sample is relatively small, it is the only survey dataset available on 1.5- and second-generation Korean American adults gathered though random sampling.

Telephone interviews with the primary pastors for 35 second-generation Korean American congregations in the New York-New Jersey area, conducted by the first author between March and August 2003, comprise the other major data source for our study. The screening telephone calls revealed that out of 528 Korean immigrant churches included in the 2002 Korean Churches Directory of New York, 38 churches had established an English-language ministry for young adults (18 years old and over). The first author conducted interviews with pastors from 33 (out of 38) second-generation congregations attached to Korean immigrant churches. In addition, interviews with pastors from two (out of five) independent Korean English-language congregations in the New York-New Jersey area were conducted during the same period. The questionnaire included 45 questions, mostly open-ended. The questions were related to general information about each congregation and components of Korean ethnic culture in services and other socio-cultural activities. Korean cultural components include using the Korean language, eating Korean food, observing Korean holidays, and assessing how each pastor stresses Korean cultural components in church services. Each interview took approximately 20-55 minutes to complete.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF RELIGION

Korean religious leaders, including second-generation Korean Americans, have used the term “silent exodus” to predict or indicate the drastic drop in second-generation Korean American adults’ participation in ethnic churches (Cha 1994; Chai 1998, 2001). Cha (1994) went so far as to say: “90% of postcollege Korean Americans are no longer attending church” (in Chai 2001:300). But to date, no concrete evidence has been provided that shows drastic declines in ethnic church participation among 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans. Here, we offer generalizable survey data that indicate 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans’ affiliation with religions and their participation in ethnic churches.

As shown in Table 1, 58% of 1.5- and second-generation Korean American respondents indicated Protestantism as their childhood religion, while 19% indicated Catholicism. Only 20% indicated that they had no religious affiliation during childhood. The proportions of respondents who chose Protestantism and Catholicism as their childhood religion are similar to those of Korean immigrant respondents who chose the two Christian religions in other survey studies (Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 2000; Park, Fawcett, Arnold, and Gardner 1990). The proportional similarity comes as no surprise given that during childhood most Korean American respondents attended Korean churches accompanied by their parents.
As to their religious affiliation at the time of the interview, 54% indicated Protestantism, 11% Catholicism, while 32% chose the no-religion category. Their current religion seems to be slightly inflated because some respondents who attended a Korean church during childhood, but who were not regular participants at the time of the interview, may have chosen either Protestantism or Catholicism as their current religion. Thus, the responses to the question about their church affiliation seem to reflect their church participation more accurately than their responses to the question about their religion. These responses reveal that 36% of the respondents were affiliated with a Protestant church while only 5% were affiliated with a Catholic church. The proportion of respondents who participated in a Protestant congregation dropped from 54% during childhood to 36% at the time of the interview, while the proportion of those who participated in a Catholic church decreased from 19% to 5%. Proportionally, far more second-generation Protestants were able to retain their childhood religion than their Catholic counterparts. This finding is not surprising, given that Korean Protestant immigrant churches are more conservative and evangelical than Korean Catholic immigrant churches. Clearly, the finding that approximately two-thirds of 1.5- and second-generation Korean American Protestant (36/54=67%) adults retain their childhood religion challenges the speculation that 90% of post-college Korean Americans no longer attend church.

Among the 72 Protestant respondents who were affiliated with a church at the time of the interview, 68% (N=49) were affiliated with a Korean congregation, while the remaining respondents participated in either a white (28%) or a multiethnic (4%) congregation. Korean Protestant immigrants very highly regard the various social functions of a Korean congregation, which is why more than
95% of them participate in a Korean congregation (Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 2000). Second-generation Korean Americans, however, are likely to attend church mainly for religious purposes and consider social purposes less important than their parents (Chai 1998:309). Thus, they may feel less compelled to attend a Korean congregation to meet their need for fellowship. Nevertheless, more than two-thirds of second-generation Korean American Protestants were found to attend a Korean congregation. Such a high proportion of second-generation Korean American Protestants participants in an ethnic congregation is possible mainly because there are sufficient English-language congregations established within Korean immigrant churches.

Survey studies show that more than 80% of Korean Protestant immigrant respondents participate in a congregation once a week or more (Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 2000). Results of the 1997-1998 Presbyterian Racial and Ethnic Panel Studies also reveal that 78% of Korean Presbyterians participate in their congregation's Sunday worship service every week, compared to 49% of Latino, 34% of African American, and 28% of Caucasian Presbyterians (Kim and Kim 2001:82). The vast majority of Korean immigrant churches have two or more meetings per week (the prayer and/or Bible study meeting) in addition to the Sunday worship service, with more than 20% of members participating in these extra meetings (Min 1992, 2000)

As Table 2 shows, 82% of 1.5- and second-generation Korean American respondents affiliated with a Protestant church participates in it at least once a week - as frequently as Korean immigrants. Compared to Latino, African American and Caucasian Christians, 1.5- and second-generation Korean American Protestants participate in a church with exceptional frequency. As will be discussed later, survey data reveal that the majority of Korean English-language congregations hold two extra meetings per week for worship service, prayer, and

| Frequency of 1.5- and Second-Generation Koreas’ Participation in a Religious Congregation |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| **Once a year or more often**   | 10 (12%) | 5 (7%) | 5 (45%) |
| **Once a month or more often**  | 11 (13%) | 8 (11%) | 1 (9%) |
| **Once a week or more often**   | 61 (74%) | 57 (82%) | 5 (45%) |
| **Total**                       | 82 (100%) | *70 (100%) | 11 (100%) |

Source: Telephone interviews with 1.5- and second-generation young adults (23-35 years old) through randomly selected households with 20 prominent Korean surnames in New York in 1998

*Two Protestant respondents who were affiliated with a church did not respond to the question regarding frequency of participation.
Bible study. These findings suggest that second-generation Korean American Protestants have inherited the Korean style of congregationalism. Given that fewer second-generation Korean Protestants participate in a Korean congregation mainly for fellowship and ethnic networks than do Korean immigrants, the level of their religiosity reflected in their frequent participation in a congregation seems to be very high.

We previously noted in Table 1 that second-generation Korean American Catholic respondents had a much lower rate of religious retention from childhood to adulthood than their Protestant counterparts. Table 2 shows that even those Catholic respondents who participated in a church did so much less frequently than those Protestant respondents. Only 45% of 1.5- and second-generation Korean American Catholics regularly participated in the Sunday worship service, compared to 82% of their Protestant counterparts. Because Korean Catholic immigrant churches are more liberal in theology than Korean Presbyterian churches, they seem to transmit a more liberal theology to the second generation, in addition to having greater difficulty transmitting their religion.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE THROUGH RELIGION

The degree to which younger-generation Korean Protestants retain Korean cultural traditions through religion will be influenced partly by their level of participation in a Korean church. Although two-thirds of 1.5- and second-generation Korean American Protestant respondents participated in a Korean church, the vast majority of 1.5- and second-generation Korean American Protestants were likely to attend a Korean English-language congregation rather than an immigrant congregation. Previous studies indicate that second-generation Korean American English-language congregations, heavily evangelical, make a great effort to dissociate their worship and religious rituals from Korean culture and ethnic traditions (Alumkal 1999, 2001; Chai 1998, 2001; Park 2001). This suggests that participation in a Korean congregation does not necessarily enable 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans to retain their cultural traditions.

Our survey data largely confirm results of the previous case studies regarding the near-absence of Korean cultural components in second-generation Korean Protestant congregations. However, before we examine the lack of Korean cultural content, we provide general information about the pastors and memberships of the Korean English-language congregations in New York to help contextualize the survey data. About half of the pastors in the Korean English-language congregations were ordained pastors, while the remaining half were non-ordained evangelical pastors (jumdosa), many of whom were enrolled in a theological seminary at the time of the interview. Two of the pastors were white Americans, one was an Asian Indian, and the rest (N=32) were Korean. Among
the 32 Korean pastors, half were 1.5-generation and 31% were U.S.-born Korean Americans. The rest (19%) were Korean immigrants. The leadership of Korean immigrant churches seem to favor 1.5-generation Korean pastors over the second generation for Korean English-language congregations, because their bilingualism and biculturalism can speak to both immigrant- and second-generation members more effectively. Only four of the primary pastors were women.

Large Korean immigrant churches in New York have recently established English-language congregations for second-generation Korean Americans. Out of 35 congregations examined, only two were established before 1990. The vast majority of English-language congregations were started in the 1990s, while eight were established in 2000 or after. As more 1.5- and second-generation Korean Americans reach adulthood, the number of Korean English-language congregations within Korean immigrant churches is likely to increase. Because of financial constraints, Korean English-language congregations are still unable to become independent from Korean immigrant churches. However, as they become financially self-sufficient, they are likely to become fully independent from Korean immigrant churches.

The vast majority of Korean English-language congregations are fairly small in size, with an average membership of 65. Participants in Korean English-language congregations are usually 1.5- and second-generation Korean American young adults aged 18 to 39. In one Korean English-language congregation in an upper-middle class neighborhood in upstate New York, however, the congregation was composed of Korean children, their immigrant parents, and a small number of white participants, with ages ranging from the very young (elementary school) to the elderly. The pastor of that church said that the intergenerational congregation was integrating second-generation children with their immigrant parents for worship services to infuse Korean cultural components into the Korean English-language congregation. This integrated intergenerational worship service was possible because there were a sufficient number of Korean immigrants fluent in English. Most immigrant members who were not fluent in English generally participated in one of the two Korean-language services offered at the church. It is important to note that some second- and many 1.5-generation Korean American Protestants who are fluent in Korean participate in a Korean-language immigrant congregation rather than in an English-language congregation.7

All but four English-language congregations had non-Korean members, ranging from 2% to 20%. The majority of non-Korean members were Chinese, but there were some Asian Indians, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Whites, Latinos, and

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7 Some U.S.-born and 1.5-generation Korean Americans are married to Korean immigrants. These cross-generation Korean Protestant couples are more likely to attend a Korean immigrant church than a Korean English-language congregation.
Blacks. The White members who participated in a Korean congregation usually were married to Koreans. Emerson and Kim (2003) defined a “multiracial congregation” as one in which “less than eighty percent of the members share the same racial background.” Applying this definition, none of the surveyed Korean English-language congregations in New York in our study can be considered a multiracial congregation. Four pastors in particular, however, showed great interest in developing their congregations into multiracial ones by actively recruiting non-Korean Christians. Moreover, most interviewed respondents agreed that their congregations should be open to all racial and ethnic groups; however, they would not actively recruit non-Korean members. As a 1.5-generation Korean American pastor said: “I do not intentionally target Chinese and other non-Korean members. But if non-Koreans come, we are open. If the flow of newcomers dictates the change in the ethnic composition, I will follow it.” Only three pastors wanted to develop their congregations as specifically Korean ethnic congregations to meet the unique needs of Korean Americans. Given these trends, Korean English-language congregations are increasingly likely to develop into multiracial congregations in the future.

Previous research, mostly case studies, has presented second-generation Korean American Protestants and Korean English-language congregations mainly as evangelical (Alumkal 1999, 2001; Chai 1998, 2001; Kim 2003; Park 2001). The results of our survey of Korean English-language congregations in New York support their claims about the heavily evangelical orientation of Korean English-language congregations. Out of 35 congregations surveyed, 29 congregations (83%) were found to be evangelical while only six were mainline.

The specific orientation of second-generation Korean American congregations, whether mainline or evangelical, seems to be determined partly by the theological orientation of the pastor. The pastors of the six mainline congregations were trained in liberal to moderate theological seminaries (such as New York Theological Seminary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and Princeton Theological Seminary), while those of the other evangelical congregations were mostly trained or were being trained in conservative theological seminaries or Christian schools (such as Westminster, Gordon Conwell Seminary, and Biblical Seminary). The evangelical orientation of Korean English-language congregations has also been affected by the conservatism and evangelical orientation of Korean immigrant churches. The Korean immigrant churches within which six mainline Korean English-language congregations were established were liberal in their theological orientation, while the “mother churches” of the other evangelical congregations were generally conservative and evangelical. Conservative Korean immigrant churches are prone to hire socially and theologically conservative pastors for their Korean English-language congregations, whereas liberal churches prefer to hire liberal pastors.

Finally, Korean English-language congregations take the evangelical position partly because their members are heavily evangelical. Two pastors included in the
survey commented that they had to follow the evangelical orientation to meet the spiritual needs of their members, although they personally were more comfortable with the mainline approach. A number of sources have suggested that second-generation Korean American Protestants, regardless of the region of the country, are predominantly evangelical (Busto 1996; Chai 2001:165; Kim 2003; Park 2001). They also indicate that, in addition to Korean immigrant churches, the evangelical movement in college campuses had a strong influence on the evangelization of second-generation Korean American Christians. The number of Korean American college students has gradually increased since the early 1970s when parachurch organizations, such as Campus Crusade for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and the Navigators, began to have a significant influence on the evangelical movement on college campuses (Busto 1996). Although Korean Christian students on most East Coast college campuses have an established Korean Christian Fellowship, they have been affected by both the above-mentioned evangelical parachurch organizations and inter-college Korean Christian groups and meetings.

All English-language congregations within Korean immigrant churches were found to be financially dependent upon immigrant congregations, but independent in worship services and other socio-cultural activities. They usually held joint services with immigrant congregations two or three times a year on important religious holidays, such as Easter and Thanksgiving. But, as Chai (1998; 2001) and Park (2001) have aptly pointed out, Korean English-language congregations have developed entirely different worship styles from Korean immigrant congregations. Korean immigrant congregations sing traditional hymns accompanied by piano and organ. By contrast, Korean English-language evangelical congregations sing contemporary gospel songs projected through overhead speakers, accompanied by guitar, drum, base, and/or keyboard. Korean English-language congregations obtain worship songs and other materials produced by white American evangelical organizations, such as PASSION, Calvary Church, and the Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

Two other major differences in worship style exist between Korean immigrant and Korean English-language congregations: in the formal-informal and collective-individual continuums. Korean immigrant congregations emphasize formality and collective experience, especially for the Sunday worship service; almost all participants wear formal dress, with men wearing neckties. They try to communicate with God mainly through the medium of the pastors’ sermons. By contrast, English-language congregations maintain an informal style of worship and emphasize each individual member’s spiritual connections with God. Most participants, even in the Sunday worship service, are more casually dressed as they sing and clap hands to the rhythm of gospel songs. Many interviewed pastors of Korean English-language congregations responded that, for an evangelical Christian, worship is the personal encounter with and celebration of God. Therefore, spirituality and emotional engagement are far more important than
formality and collectivity. Many respondents were, consequently, very critical of the tendency of Korean immigrant congregations to emphasize participation in the congregation and group activities.

Jeung’s study in San Francisco (2002) revealed that pan-Asian evangelical congregations identify primarily with the broader American evangelical subculture, and as a corollary pay little attention to ethnic and Asian cultural heritage, while mainline congregations try to integrate Asian cultural resources with Christian rituals. Major findings of our survey strongly support his conclusion. The pastors were asked several questions related to ethnic cultural components in each congregation. Regarding the use of language, only one mainline English-language congregation, where parents and children held services together, was found to provide bilingual sermons, hymns, and prayers. None of the other congregations used the Korean language in any of the three components of worship services.

The pastors were also asked about the frequency of their use of one or more Korean terms or phrases in their sermons. Eleven pastors (31%) reported that they used them occasionally. Almost half of the respondents (46%) said they had never used a Korean word. The pastors were asked about the number of times they had mentioned Korea or the Korean American community in their sermons during the past year. Perhaps surprisingly, 40% reported that they had never mentioned Korea, while 20% said they had never made reference to the Korean community. These are in sharp contrast with pastors in Korean immigrant congregations, who almost always use Korea and/or the Korean immigrant community in content.

Studies of Korean immigrant churches indicate that all Korean immigrant congregations observe two major Korean cultural holidays and two national holidays (Min 1992). By contrast, only four Korean English-language congregations were found to celebrate and/or observe one or more of the four Korean holidays. In another five congregations the pastors make reference to a few Korean holidays in their sermons. The four Korean English-language congregations were able to celebrate Korean holidays largely because many members of each congregation had parents who attended immigrant congregations within the same church. When these congregations become independent from immigrant congregations, none of them is likely to celebrate or observe Korean cultural or national holidays.

The only ethnic evidence that remains in Korean English-language congregations is Korean food. Thirty-three out of the 35 congregations surveyed were found to serve snacks or full lunch after the Sunday main service. The majority (52%) of them served mostly Korean food, compared to 30% that served mostly American food. The rest served Korean and non-Korean food almost equally. If it were not for the immigrant congregations that prepared full Korean lunch for members of English-language congregations, most members of the English-lan-
guage congregations would not be exposed to Korean food. In the case where English-language congregations prepare their own snacks or lunch, they serve American food more often than Korean food, because, as one respondent said, "Korean food is more difficult to prepare." Because more and more Korean English-language congregations will become independent from immigrant congregations, exposure to ethnic food will diminish in the future.

As expected, the Korean English-language congregations led by immigrant pastors were found to include more ethnic components in worship services and other socio-cultural activities than those churches led by second-generation or non-Korean pastors. However, it is wrong to presume that Korean English-language congregations do not use the Korean language for services and do not practice other Korean cultural traditions because their leaders are not fluent in Korean and are not familiar with Korean customs. Not only Korean immigrant and 1.5-generation respondents, but also some second-generation respondents, were found to be fluent in Korean. In fact, they were hired partly because of their fluency in Korean. The pastors of Korean English-language congregations avoid using the Korean language for worship services and minimize Korean cultural content mainly because they and their congregations are heavily evangelical. Five of the six mainline congregations were found to put more emphasis on Korean cultural components in worship services and other socio-cultural activities and have more services together with immigrant congregations.

The pastors of Korean English-language congregations were asked the following questions: "How important do you think it is for a second-generation Korean church to preserve Korean cultural traditions? Why?" Seven of the respondents (20%) considered it very important for a second-generation Korean American congregation to preserve Korean cultural traditions; five were found to serve mainline congregations. Responding to the question of why these pastors saw it important to emphasize ethnic elements, a 57-year-old Korean immigrant pastor who was serving in a mainline congregation commented:

I think it is important. We are all brothers and sisters under God. But we as Koreans have unique cultural traditions and a sense of affinity because we share blood. We can use our heritage and culture to strengthen our faith. I often pray for South Korea. When giving sermons I always make reference to Korean cultural holidays and Mother's Day.

About one-third of the respondents reported that it is somewhat important for second-generation Korean American congregations to preserve Korean cultural traditions. But they also emphasized that priority should be put on religious

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8Because many congregations start the Sunday's worship service at 11 am or at 1/1:30 pm, their members can have full lunch prepared by their immigrant congregations before or after the service.
faith rather than on Korean culture. Some of these respondents pointed to the
difficulty of striking a balance between religious faith and ethnic culture. The
remaining 46% expressed the view that second-generation Korean American
congregations should not play a role in the preservation of Korean culture. They
emphasized that priority be placed on spreading the gospel and universal
Christian values and not on retaining ethnic culture. For example, a 1.5-genera-
tion Korean American pastor who serves a Korean English-language congrega-
tion within a full gospel church responded:

When you minister a congregation, the first priority is the gospel. It is not good to empha-
size a particular culture. Maintaining Korean culture is not an agenda in service. They
can get it elsewhere. There is no agenda other than the gospel. Individually, I have [a]
strong Korean attachment. I often watch Korean soccer games at home. But I cannot
make that Korean cultural thing an agenda in my congregation.

Another 1.5-generation Korean American pastor, who is fluent in Korean, made
a similar comment:

It is important we Korean Americans maintain Korean cultural traditions. I am very eth-
nic. I teach my children the Korean language and customs at home. But I try to separate
the spiritual community from the family. It is the job of the family to teach Korean tra-
ditions. But our spiritual community should focus on the gospel. No particular culture
should be emphasized and no politics should be involved in a congregation.

As previously noted, almost all Korean English-language congregations have
a small number of non-Korean members. Most respondents justified their effort
to minimize Korean cultural components in their congregations by noting the
presence of a few or several non-Korean members. One female pastor said that
even the presence of a single non-Korean member justifies refraining from the use
of the Korean language in worship services. Many respondents agreed that the
inclusion of some Korean cultural components is not a problem as long as prior-
ity is put on Christianity. But many respondents view Korean immigrant congre-
gations as putting priority on Korean culture over Christian things. As a third-
generation Korean American pastor put it: “As long as we accept Korean cultural
components under Christianity, there is no problem. But many Korean immi-
grant churches put Koreanness above Christianity.” Some of the pastors were
very critical of Korean immigrant churches’ overemphasis on “Confucian cultural
components” that they viewed as un-Christian. For example, a second-genera-
tion pastor said:

Definitely, I agree. They [Korean immigrant churches] put Korean culture ahead of bib-
lical teachings. Korean cultural things get in the way of doing Christianity. Sexism,
ageism, and overemphasis on going to good colleges are incongruent with Christian val-
ues. They also prevent outreaching non-Korean members and thus the church’s growth.
While most respondents are critical of Korean immigrant churches’ overemphasis on Korean culture, many of them had positive views about the unique aspects of Korean Protestantism. They considered “being church-oriented” and “being fervent Christians” as two exceptional aspects of Korean Protestantism and wanted to maintain these Korean traditions of Christianity. As one respondent said: “Korean people have developed a different style of Christianity. Korean Christians are fervent, church-centered, and strongly committed to Christian life. They spend a lot of time for the church. We, younger generation Koreans, should preserve these unique elements of Korean Christianity.”

Respondents were asked about the frequency of weekly congregational meetings. All English-language congregations were found to have at least one extra meeting for Bible study, prayer, discipleship, and/or social activities, in addition to the Sunday main service. Most congregations were found to have two or more extra meetings per week, usually on Wednesday, Friday and/or Saturday. Nearly half (46%) of the respondents reported that their congregations held “small group” meetings regularly for Bible study and fellowship, either at a private home, in the church, or at a restaurant. A few more respondents said their congregations would start “small group” meetings when their congregations had sufficient members. The frequency with which the congregations hold small-group meetings ranges from weekly to monthly. “Small-group meetings” for Korean English-language congregations resemble the “district service” or “cell ministry” for Korean immigrant churches (Kwon et al. 1997; Min 1992). Although not included in the questionnaire, several respondents were probed about whether the source of extra weekly meetings in their congregations can be attributed to the influence of Korean immigrant churches. They reported that both Korean immigrant and American evangelical churches had influenced Korean English-language congregations to hold two or more additional meetings per week.

Korean immigrant churches exhibit gender hierarchy and other patriarchal elements in their organization. The 2002 Korean Churches Directory of New York shows that women pastors headed only nine of 528 Korean Protestant churches. Results of the 1997-1998 Presbyterian Racial and Ethnic Panel Studies reveal that only 8% of Korean ordained elders were women (Kim and Kim 2001:84). A. R. Kim’s study (1996:76) also shows that in Korean immigrant churches men control positions of power and authority while women play a predominantly nurturing role (fundraising, prayer meetings, visiting the sick etc.).

Because the majority of the respondents are critical of Korean Confucian cultural elements in Korean immigrant congregations, Korean English-language congregations are likely to be more gender-egalitarian than immigrant congregations. As expected, survey results reveal that, in terms of representation on functional committees, women seem to do better in English-language congregations. Questioned as to how well women are represented in leadership positions in their congregation, many respondents made the following comments: “women are very active,” “women are more active in my congregation than in the immigrant con-
ggregation,” “half and half,” and “80% of leaders are women.” However, all but four respondents stated their theological position that women should not be allowed to serve as pastors or elders. Even a woman pastor agreed that men could be more effective pastors than women.

The respondents attributed the under-representation of women in leadership positions in immigrant congregations to Korean “Confucian patriarchy.” However, they pointed to “Biblical patriarchy” to justify the principle of no-woman-pastor or no-woman-elder. The following comment by a second-generation respondent most succinctly summarizes their effort to separate “Confucian patriarchy” from “Biblical patriarchy,” and functional committee leaders from clergy leadership positions:

Unlike Korean immigrant congregations, we do not endorse the position that men are better than women. Most of functional committee leaders in our congregation are women. But, according to the Bible, men and women have different roles. Most of our members accept the Biblical position that women should not serve as elders or pastors. Most women members do not feel comfortable with a woman serving as a pastor. But it does not mean that men and women have different levels of power and status. We do not accept Korean Confucian patriarchy.

Another respondent made a similar comment: “I support more male leadership in the congregation. But I do this, not because of Korean cultural traditions, but because of my Biblical theory. That is how God made men and women. They have different roles.”

The above discussion helps us locate the sources of gender hierarchy and patriarchal practices in Korean immigrant congregations, as well as Korean English-language congregations. Some researchers have attributed gender hierarchy in Korean immigrant churches to Korean Confucian cultural traditions (Kim and Kim 2001; A. R. Kim 1996; Min 1992), while others have focused on the Bible as its major source (Alumkal 1999; J. H. Kim 1996). But the foregoing discussion suggests that both factors—Korean cultural traditions and evangelical Christianity—are responsible for the highly gendered organizational structure of Korean immigrant churches and other patriarchal practices there. Korean English-language congregations have moderated gender hierarchy by discarding “Confucian patriarchy,” but they still maintain some level of gender hierarchy by embracing evangelical Christianity.

CONCLUSION

Korean Protestant immigrants in the United States have established Korean churches characterized by congregation-oriented evangelical Christianity and Korean Confucian ideology. By practising Korean cultural traditions through active participation in congregations, Korean Protestant immigrants have been able to preserve Korean culture. However, Korean particularistic values are

Despite pessimistic speculation, our data reveal that Korean Protestant immigrants are fairly successful in transmitting their religion to their children. About two-thirds of 1.5- and second-generation Korean American Protestant adults have preserved their childhood religion, with the majority participating in Korean congregations. Moreover, following the congregation-oriented style of Korean Protestantism, they participate in Korean congregations with exceptional frequency. However, results of telephone interviews with the pastors show that Korean English-language congregations have eliminated most Korean cultural traditions from their worship services and socio-cultural activities. None of 1.5- and second-generation congregations was found to use the Korean language for sermons, praying or singing devotional songs. Only four of them were found to celebrate and/or observe one or more of the four Korean cultural and national holidays along with their parents in immigrant churches. About 40% of the respondents reported that they had not mentioned Korea in their sermons over the past year, while 20% did not make a reference to the Korean community.

To put it simply, Korean Protestant immigrants have failed to transmit Korean cultural traditions to their children through religion, although they have been fairly successful in transmitting their religion. It has been difficult for Korean Protestant immigrants to transmit Korean cultural traditions to the second generation through religion because Protestantism is not a religion indigenous to Korea. Since Protestantism has gained popularity in South Korea only over the past three decades, it has not incorporated Korean folk culture in the form of food, holidays, dress, wedding, funerals, and so on. Korean Protestant churches have incorporated some elements of Confucianism, such as age-based authority, emphasis on going to a good college, and their more sexist organization. But second-generation Korean American congregations have difficulty in accommodating these hierarchical Confucian values and customs because they, unlike elements of Korean folk culture, conflict with American individualism. Our survey and other studies (Chai 1998) reveal that both second-generation Korean pastors and lay members consider these Confucian values “very un-Christian.”

The literature on Christian groups in the United States has overemphasized participation in congregations as the main channel for preserving ethnic cultural traditions. Based on our analysis, we argue that even for Christian groups, the correlation between religion and ethnic culture is more important for the inter-generational transmission of culture through religion than mere participation in congregations. Our study shows that 1.5- and second-generation Korean
Protestants are in a tenuous position in terms of retaining their ethnic culture through participation in ethnic congregations because of the dissociation between Protestantism and Korean culture.

Korean English-language congregations have eliminated much of Korean cultural traditions partly because they assume a heavily evangelical orientation. Our interviews reveal that the strong evangelical orientation of Korean English-language congregations, with their emphasis on the gospel and their idea of the universal priesthood of all believers, prevents them from infusing Korean cultural components into Christian rituals. Based on his study of a Japanese American church in Canada, Mark Mullins (1987) provided the evolutionary model for the intergenerational transformation of ethnic churches from the home-language congregation for immigrants through the bilingual-bicultural congregation for the second-generation to the English-language monolingual congregation for the third and later generations. But not all Asian Christian immigrant groups are likely to follow this model. Because of their heavily evangelical orientation, most of 1.5- and second-generation Korean American congregations have already become English-language monolingual congregations.

REFERENCES


