

The Immigration of Koreans to the United States: A Review of 45 Year (1965-2009) Trends*

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This paper reviews changes in patterns of Koreans' immigration to the United States between 1965 and 2009 based on annual statistical reports by the immigration office. This review captures changes in the annual number of Korean immigrants, their immigration mechanisms and occupational characteristics, and the proportion of status adjusters. The annual number of Korean immigrants gradually increased for the first ten years, reached the peak between 1976 and 1990, gradually decreased in the 1990s, and slightly increased in the 2000s again. At the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, professionals, especially medical professionals, composed a significant proportion of Korean immigrants. The proportion of Korean immigrants in specialty occupations declined in the late 1970s and early 1980, with a concomitant increase in the proportion of family-based immigrants. But the trend reversed beginning in the early 1990s, with the gradual increase in the proportion of Korean specialty immigrants and the radical decrease in the proportion of family-based immigrants. The predominant majority of Korean immigrants during recent years are status adjusters. The presence of an increasing number of non-immigrant temporary residents in the Korean community, along with great technological advances, has helped Korean residents maintain strong transnational ties to their homeland.

Keywords: Korean Emigration, Korean Immigration, International Students, Post-1965 Korean Community in the U.S., Globalization

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Introduction

The Korean population, including the multiracial, in the United States has grown to more than 1.7 million in 2010. More than 95% of Korean Americans consist of post-1965 immigrants and their children. The influx of a large number of Korean immigrants to the United States since the late 1960s was made possible by the Immigration Act of 1965 that was in full effect in 1968. The new immigration law abolished the race-based discrimination in assigning immigration quotas and gave equal opportunity for U.S. immigration to all countries. The liberalized immigration law has resulted in a radical change in the source countries of immigrants. Before 1965, the vast majority of immigrants originated from European countries, with immigrants from Asian countries composing less than 5%. By contrast, about 75% of post-1965 immigrants originated from Latin America and Asia, with European immigrants making up less than 15% (Min 2002).

South Korea is one of the major beneficiaries of the new immigration law. As will be shown in this paper, approximately one million Koreans immigrated to the United States between 1965 and 2009. But the Korean immigration flow has gone through changes over time since 1965 in size, immigrants' entry mechanisms and socioeconomic backgrounds, and the proportion of status adjusters. This paper reviews changes in patterns of Koreans' immigration to the United States over the past 45 years. It will focus on changes in patterns during the most recent years (2000 and after). Tables and figures presented in this paper are based on *Annual Reports* and *Statistical Yearbooks*, which are published annually by the Immigration and Naturalization Service between 1965 and 2001, and *Yearbooks of Immigration* by Office of Immigration Statistics between 2002 and 2009. I consider this review of Korean immigration patterns with extensive statistics useful to scholars studying Korean Americans in the United States and Korea. It will also serve as an important reference source for Korean social workers and community leaders in the United States and policymakers involving overseas Koreans in Korea. Because of the practical implications of immigration data, I want to make this article available to readers in Korea.

Theoretical Perspectives

To explain international migration, social scientists have developed

various theories, each of which emphasizes a particular factor. I consider the following four factors most useful to understanding changing patterns of Koreans' immigration to the United States: (1) the push-pull factors: (2) the immigration policy of the U.S. government and the emigration policy of the Korean government, (3) the military, political, and economic linkages between the United States and South Korea, and (4) globalization and easiness of population movement. These four factors, couched in four theories, complement one another to help us understand changes in patterns of Koreans' trans-Pacific migration the United States.

The push-pull theory is the oldest theory of international migration that focuses on individuals' motivations to leave their home country for a new country for temporary or permanent residence (Lee 1966; Todaro 1969). Common push factors include economic difficulty caused by famine or changes in industrial structure (economic migration), discrimination and even physical insecurity due to one's minority status, and a change in government or wars (refugee migration). The pull factors include better economic opportunities, better opportunities for children's education, and political freedom (refugee migration). The push-pull theory is particularly useful in explaining the massive exodus of Koreans for U.S.-bound migration between 1965 and 1990, as well as pioneer Korean immigrants' movement to Hawaii in the beginning of the twentieth century. Even now, the difficulty in obtaining a college education in Korea and the comparative ease of obtaining one in the United States are important contributing factors to the international migration of young and middle-aged Koreans.

Regardless, aliens, however motivated, cannot immigrate to the United States unless they are permitted to do so both by the U.S. government and by their home-country governments (Zolberg 1989, 2001). Thus the U.S. immigration policy and home countries' emigration policies partly determine how many and which particular aliens (what nationalities and what class background) are going to be admitted to the United States. Beginning with the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the U.S. government took a series of measures to exclude Asians from immigration to the United States. But the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 finally opened the door to all Asian countries for U.S.-bound emigration. The U.S. government established the liberalized immigration law in 1965 after the Korean military government had already formulated a liberal emigration policy as a means to controlling population pressure (Kim 1981, pp. 55-70). The Korean government even created more medical schools to export more Korean medical professionals to the United States.

In addition, the U.S. government's military and political interventions in world affairs to counter leftist insurgences, turn back community invasions or quell outbreaks of violence have contributed to the mass emigration of people from those countries (Massey 1999, pp. 42-43; Teitelbaum 1987). Militarily and politically, the United States has been deeply involved in South Korea since the breakdown of the Korean War in 1950. The fact that most Korean immigrants admitted to the United States between 1950 and 1964 were wives of U.S. servicemen or orphans—many of them war orphans—adopted by American citizens is testimony to the significance of the U.S.-Korean military and political linkages for the migration of Koreans to the United States. Post-1965 immigrants have included far more occupational immigrants than pre-1965 Korean immigrants. But the close military, political and economic relations between the United States and South Korea have continued to contribute to the mass migration of Koreans in the post-1965 period (Kim 1987). The migration of Korean women married to U.S. servicemen stationed in South Korea increased in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Moreover, strong U.S.-Korean ties and the continuous presence of American servicemen in Korea with its U.S. TV networks (AFKN) came to have a strong American cultural influence in Korea, which led middle-class Koreans to view America as a country of affluence and prosperity.

Finally, the globalization perspective is useful in understanding Koreans' international migration to the United States during recent years, especially a slight increase in both the annual number of Korean immigrants and a radical increase in the proportion of Korean status adjusters. In the 1980s, when the international movement of labor was expanding rapidly, a number of scholars tried to explain international migration flows within a global hierarchy (Portes and Walton 1981; Sassen 1988). In their view, international migration is linked to the development of the global economic system in which non-capitalist societies are gradually being inserted into the global markets. The penetration of capitalist economic relations into non-capitalist or developing countries creates a mobile population that is prone to migration to capitalist societies (Massey 2001, p. 41). To maximize their profits, the owners and managers of capitalist firms in core countries also seek to get not only raw materials and consumers, but also laborers in peripheral countries.

As will be shown shortly, the proportion of employment-sponsored Korean immigrants in professional and managerial occupations have gradually increased since the early 1990s, accounting for a majority in the latter half of the 2000s. This indicates the usefulness of the globalization of

economy to Korean immigration patterns. However, as Castle (2000, 2002) aptly points out, the globalization of international migration should pay attention not only to the globalization of the economic system, but also to that in other areas, such as the media, education, and travel. As will be shown later in this article, the proportion of Koreans who came to the United States as nonimmigrants (international students, temporary workers, visitors, and so forth) and subsequently changed their status to that of permanent residents radically increased during recent years. This indicates that the globalization of education, travel, and the media has played as important a role as economic globalization.

Changes in Immigration Size

As shown in Table 1, the annual number of Korean immigrants gradually increased beginning in 1965. It reached the 30,000 mark in 1976 and maintained an annual number of over 30,000 until 1990. Between 1976 and 1990, Korea was the third largest source country of immigrants to the United States, next to Mexico and the Philippines. To explain the expansion of Korean immigration to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, we need to emphasize push factors from Korea. The low standard of living in Korea, characterized by lack of job opportunity, was the major factor that pushed many Koreans to seek emigration to the United States in the 1960s through the early 1980s. Per capita income in Korea was only \$251 in 1970. It increased to \$1,355 in 1980, but it was only about 1/8 of the per capita income in the United States in the same year (Min 2006b, p. 15).

Political insecurity and lack of political freedom associated with military dictatorship between 1960 and 1987 in South Korea was the second major push factor to the massive Korean emigration to the United States. In addition, the military and political tensions between South Korea and North Korea, and fear of another war in the Korean peninsula also pushed many high-class Koreans to take refuge in the United States. Finally, various difficulties in giving their children a college education in Korea due to extreme competition in admissions and high tuitions played another important role in the exodus of many Koreans to the United States during the period.

Without a doubt, better economic and educational opportunities in the United States served as major push-pull factors in Korean immigrants' personal decisions for U.S.-bound emigration. But we cannot explain the

Table 1. Number of Korean Immigrants (by Country of Birth) to the U.S., 1965-2009

Year	Number of Immigrants	Year	Number of Immigrants
1965	2,165	1988	34,703
1966	2,492	1989	34,222
1967	3,956	1990	32,301
1968	3,811	1991	26,518
1969	6,045	1992	19,359
1970	9,314	1993	18,026
1971	14,297	1994	16,011
1972	18,876	1995	16,047
1973	22,930	1996	18,185
1974	28,028	1997	14,239
1975	28,362	1998	14,268
1976	30,803	1999	12,840
1977	30,917	2000	15,830
1978	29,288	2001	20,742
1979	29,248	2002	21,021
1980	32,320	2003	12,512
1981	32,663	2004	19,766
1982	31,724	2005	26,562
1983	33,339	2006	24,386
1984	33,042	2007	22,405
1985	35,253	2008	26,666
1986	35,776	2009	25,859
1987	35,849	Total	1,002,966

Sources: Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports*, 1965-1978 and *Statistical Yearbook*, 1979-2001; Office of Immigration Statistics, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, 2002-2009.

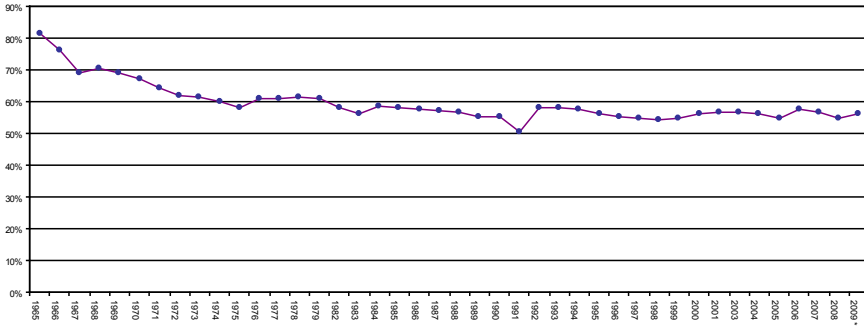
mass migration of Koreans to the United States by Koreans' individual psychological motivations alone. As previously pointed out, we also need to pay attention to the fact that the strong U.S.-Korean military, political and economic linkages served as important structural factors that significantly contributed to Koreans' mass migration to the United States. South Korea probably has maintained closer military and political relations with the

United States than any other Asian country, which has contributed to the influx of Korean immigrants. The continuing presence of the sizeable U.S. forces (approximately 40,000) in Korea until recently contributed to the migration of many Korean women through their marriages to American servicemen. The migration of Korean wives of U.S. servicemen provides the basis for subsequent kin-based immigration. Moreover, close U.S.-Korean ties, the presence of U.S. forces in Korea, and the postgraduate training of many Korean intellectuals in the United States popularized American culture in Korea.

Going back to Table 1, in 1991 there was a big reduction (almost 8,000 from the previous year), well below 30,000, in the annual number of Korean immigrants. The number continued to decline in the 1990s, reaching the lowest point (12,840) in 1999. By contrast, the total number of immigrants to the United States and numbers of immigrants from other Asian countries increased phenomenally in the 1990s compared to the previous decade. The increase in the U.S. immigration flow in the 1990s was due mainly to the effect of the Immigration Act of 1990 that raised the total number of immigrants to 675,000. This means that Korean immigrants became a smaller group relative to other major immigrant groups.

It is not difficult to explain why the Korean immigration flow declined drastically in the 1990s. To put it simply, the great improvements in economic and political conditions in Korea did not push too many Koreans to seek international migration in the United States or other Western countries. First of all, South Korea improved its economic conditions significantly, which is reflected by the per capita income of nearly \$6,000 in 1990 (Min 2006b, p. 15). Korea's per capita income reached almost \$10,000 in 2000. The advanced economy in Korea was able to absorb college-educated work forces and even attract American-educated professionals and managers. South Korea also improved its political conditions through a popular election in 1987, putting an end to the 26-year old military dictatorship. Before that, many American-educated Koreans had been reluctant to return to Korea for their careers due to lack of political freedom.

Also, as Korea improved its economic conditions, fewer and fewer Korean women married American servicemen beginning in the late 1980s. In addition, the media exposure in South Korea of Korean immigrants' adjustment difficulties in the United States discouraged Koreans from seeking U.S.-bound emigration. In particular, the victimization of more than 2,000 Korean merchants during the 1992 Los Angeles riots was widely publicized in Korea (Min 1996, p. 156). Popularization of air travel enabled



Sources: Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports*, 1965-1978 and *Statistical Yearbook*, 1979-2001; Office of Immigration Statistics, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, 2002-2009.

* Data on gender are not available for 1980, 1981, and 2002.

Fig. 1. Proportion of Women among Korean Immigrants (by Country of Birth), 1965-2009.

many Koreans to visit their friends and relatives in American cities and witness the latter's long hours of work under difficult conditions. By the early 1990s, Koreans' perception of the United States as a land of prosperity and security began to change.

The annual number of Korean immigrants steadily decreased in the 1990s, dropping to 12,840 in 1999. But it began to increase again beginning in 2000, and was hovering around 25,000 in the latter half of the 2000s, with the exception of the 2003 anomaly (only 12,512). The annual numbers of Korean immigrants in the later 2000s were substantially smaller than those of Korean immigrants during the peak years between 1976 and 1990 (30,000 and 35,000), but much larger than those in the 1990s.

I believe there are two major factors that contributed to the significant increase in the number of Korean immigrants beginning in 2000. One factor seems to be a high unemployment rate in Korea that started with the financial crisis in 1998. According to Korean real estate agents, a large number of people who had lost their jobs in Korea came to the United States in 1999 and the ensuing years to find jobs in Korean-owned stores or even to explore the possibility of starting businesses. Many of these temporary residents seem to have changed their status to permanent residents in later years.

The other and more important contributing factor is a radical increase in the number of temporary Korean residents in major Korean immigrant

communities in the United States. Under the impact of globalization and by virtue of technological advances, relocation from one country to another has become much easier than before. During recent years, large numbers of Koreans visited the United States for various purposes: to study, to get training and internships, to see their family members and relatives, for temporary work, for sightseeing and so forth. Many of them continue to stay here beyond the time period for which they originally intended to stay. Many others have changed their status to permanent residents. This will be discussed in more detail in the final section of this paper.

We noted above that the economic and political problems in Korea that pushed many Koreans out of the country for emigration in earlier years were greatly mitigated in the early 1990s, which contributed to a significant reduction of the Korean immigration flow. But one thing that has pushed Koreans out of the country for emigration remains unchanged. That is the difficulty in providing their children with a college education. The number of colleges and universities has greatly increased in Korea during recent years. Thus, unlike 25 years ago, high-school graduates can now gain admission to a college if they choose one. But there is even more intense competition for admissions to decent universities than before, and without graduating from decent universities, they have little chance to find meaningful occupations in Korea. Therefore, many parents try to send their children to the United States and other English-speaking countries for a better college education than in Korea. Better opportunity for their children's college education and their own graduate education is now the most important motivation for Koreans' decisions to immigrate to the United States.

Korean Immigrants' Entry Mechanisms and Gender

According to the Immigration Act of 1965, aliens are eligible for immigration to the United States using one of three mechanisms: (1) family reunification, (2) occupational immigration, and (3) refugee/asylum status and other categories of aliens eligible for immigration by special measures. Koreans can become immigrants to the United States mainly using two mechanisms: family reunification and occupational immigration. The Immigration Act of 1965 has gone through three major revisions, respectively in 1976, 1986, and 1990. Among them, the Immigration Act of 1990 has brought about the most significant changes to the original immigration law passed by Congress in 1965. It raised the annual number of total immigrants

Table 2. Mechanisms of Koreans' Immigration to the United States, 1966–2009 (%)

Year (Country of Last Residence)	Immigrants Exempt from Numerical Limitation Total (A)**		Relative Preference Immigrants (B)		Occupational Immigrants (C)		Others (D)*	
	U.S. Total	Koreans	U.S. Total	Koreans	U.S. Total	Koreans	U.S. Total	Koreans
	1966	60.9	78.1	17.0	3.2	3.3	18.2	18.8
1967	55.2	55.3	23.3	11.0	7.4	33.3	14.1	0.4
1968	65.6	56.9	15.0	13.6	5.9	29.4	13.4	0.1
1969	56.1	50.8	25.8	18.2	8.9	21.5	9.2	9.5
1970	53.8	43.1	24.8	24.7	9.1	13.0	12.3	19.2
1971	58.5	33.9	21.6	22.5	9.1	16.3	10.9	27.3
1972	57.2	28.6	21.6	24.4	8.8	15.8	12.5	31.2
1973	58.5	29.6	23.0	37.3	6.7	12.1	11.8	21.0
1974	59.7	28.2	24.0	37.6	7.2	15.2	9.0	19.0
1975	58.5	30.2	24.8	47.4	7.6	14.9	9.1	7.5
1976	58.3	35.1	25.6	50.2	6.6	13.1	9.5	1.6
1977	40.2	35.3	28.3	56.1	5.1	8.5	26.4	0.1
1978	43.3	35.9	31.6	52.0	5.1	9.1	19.9	3.0
1979	39.3	37.6	46.4	56.7	8.2	5.3	6.1	0.4
1980	45.4	38.4	40.9	58.7	8.4	2.9	5.3	0.0
1981	27.2	30.8	55.4	60.9	7.4	8.3	10.0	0.0
1982	56.3	43.5	34.7	53.1	8.6	3.4	0.4	0.0
1983	51.9	40.7	38.1	51.0	9.9	8.3	0.0	0.0
1984	51.8	42.1	39.0	48.9	9.1	9.0	0.0	0.0
1985	53.6	44.2	37.4	48.0	8.9	7.8	0.0	0.0
1986	55.6	45.2	35.4	46.2	8.9	8.6	0.1	0.0
1987	54.9	44.0	35.2	52.6	9.0	3.4	0.9	0.0
1988	58.9	40.9	31.2	50.2	8.3	8.9	1.5	0.0
1989	74.3	42.0	19.9	48.7	4.8	9.3	1.0	0.0
1990	83.7	39.9	11.7	49.8	2.9	10.3	1.6	0.0
1991	83.9	49.1	11.8	38.5	3.0	12.4	1.2	0.0

Table 2. (Continued)

Year (Country of Birth)	Immediate Relatives of U.S. Citizens (A)		Family-sponsored Preference (B)		Employment-sponsored Preference (C)		Others (D)**	
	U.S. Total	Koreans	U.S. Total	Koreans	U.S. Total	Koreans	U.S. Total	Koreans
1992	24.2	42.0	21.9	32.4	11.9	24.3	42.0	4.2
1993	28.2	39.3	25.1	29.1	16.3	29.1	30.5	2.4
1994	31.0	40.6	26.3	29.6	15.3	28.8	27.3	1.0
1995	30.6	37.7	33.1	33.1	11.8	28.4	24.5	0.7
1996	32.8	33.9	32.1	31.8	12.8	33.7	22.3	0.6
1997	40.2	37.8	26.7	28.7	11.3	33.1	21.7	0.4
1998	42.9	36.0	29.0	30.4	11.7	33.4	16.4	0.3
1999	40.0	38.3	33.5	32.8	8.8	28.5	17.7	0.5
2000	40.9	41.8	27.7	22.5	12.6	35.2	18.8	0.5
2001	41.6	45.4	21.8	14.1	16.8	40.3	19.7	0.2
2002	45.7	45.5	17.6	10.3	16.4	44.0	20.3	0.2
2003	47.1	52.7	22.5	12.8	11.6	34.3	18.7	0.2
2004	42.9	43.5	22.7	12.5	16.4	43.9	18.0	0.1
2005	38.9	32.4	19.0	7.5	22.0	60.0	20.2	0.1
2006	45.8	45.3	17.5	9.9	12.6	44.6	24.0	0.2
2007	47.0	39.5	18.5	9.9	15.4	50.5	19.0	0.1
2008	44.1	31.6	20.6	7.7	15.0	60.6	20.3	0.1
2009	47.4	38.7	18.7	6.4	12.7	54.7	21.2	0.2

Sources: Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports, 1965-1978* and *Statistical Yearbook, 1979-2001*; Office of Immigration Statistics, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2002-2009*.

* Others include refugees/asylum adjusters, diversity immigrants, and non-preference immigrants for all years.

** Beneficiaries of IRCA were included in the A category for 1966-1991, but in the D category for 1992-2009.

to 675,000 and also the annual number of professional and managerial immigrants to 144,000, almost three times as high as before. In addition, it also allowed for admission of 195,000 temporary workers in specialty occupations, largely in professional and managerial fields, each year.

Table 2 shows immigration mechanisms for total U.S. immigrants and Korean immigrants between 1965 and 2009 by year. The Immigration Act of 1965 determined immigration mechanisms for 1966 through 1991, while the Immigration Act of 1990 affected mechanisms for 1992 through 2009. Under the Immigration Act of 1965, spouses and unmarried children of naturalized citizens (1st Preference) and immigrants (2nd Preference) were allowed to immigrate to the United States exempt from the numerical limitation of 20,000 immigrants per country per year. Naturalized citizens' married children (4th Preference) and siblings (5th Preference) were admitted subject to the numerical limitation. It assigned two categories to occupational immigration: 3rd Preference (professional/technical and administrative/managerial immigrants) and 6th Preference (other occupational immigrants).

Table 2 reveals that the majority of annual immigrants to the United States for most of the 1965-1991 years were immediate family members of naturalized citizens and permanent residents who were exempt from the numerical limitation. The second category of immigrants consisted of those who used two relative preference categories (naturalized citizens' married children and siblings). This category was smaller than that consisting of immediate family members, but much larger than that consisting of two occupational-preference immigrants. Occupational immigrants on the third column composed less than 10% of total immigrants to the United States for each year during the period.

The immigration mechanisms of Korean immigrants differ significantly from those of U.S. immigrants as a whole during the 1966-1991 period. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, immediate family members of naturalized citizens and permanent residents comprised the majority of Korean immigrants. The immigration of large numbers of Korean adoptees and "war brides" during the period contributed significantly to this trend. Also, occupational immigrants accounted for a larger percentage of Korean immigrants than total U.S. immigrants during this period. This is due to the fact that many Korean professionals, especially medical professionals, entered the United States as immigrants during the period.

But Korean immigrants experienced changes in their immigration mechanisms after the mid-1970s. While the proportion of relative-preference immigrants (naturalized citizens' brothers and sisters) achieved a gradual

increase after the mid-1970s, the percentage of occupational immigrants decreased to less than 10 percent. The increase in the proportion of relative-preference immigrants was due mainly to the fact that many Korean immigrants had become naturalized citizens by the mid-1970s and thus were able to invite their brothers and sisters. The 1976 Amendments to the 1965 Immigration Act that made it more difficult for alien professionals to immigrate to the United States¹ is primarily responsible for the great reduction in the number of occupational immigrants in the late 1970s and the 1980s.

The Immigration Act of 1990 not only increased the total number of immigrants to the United States, but also revised entry mechanisms, especially by elevating the number of occupational immigrants. We can see the effects of the revised immigration law in U.S. immigration patterns during the 1992-2009 years. Before 1992, immediate relatives (spouses, unmarried children and parents) of U.S. citizens and those (spouses and unmarried children) of permanent residents were included in the same broad category that was exempt from the numerical limitation. But from 1992 onward, immediate relatives of U.S. citizens were included in one category, with those (spouses and unmarried children) of permanent residents, along with married children and siblings of naturalized citizens, included in another category. By separating immediate relatives of naturalized citizens from those of permanent residents, the Immigration Act of 1990 emphasized the importance of immigrants getting American citizenship.

As a result of this separation, the proportion of immigrants in the first category was reduced significantly from 1992 on. In turn, the family-sponsored preference category was supposed to increase, but did not. This means that the annual number of immigrants admitted through the mechanism of naturalized citizens' siblings decreased in the 1992-2009 period. Currently, the U.S. government seems to have discouraged American citizens' brothers and sisters from immigrating to the United States by making them wait longer, approximately twelve years. In the meantime, there was a substantial increase in the proportion of the third category, occupational immigrants. The proportion of refugee/asylum immigrants also increased significantly in the 1992-2009 period, which reflects the U.S. government's active military and political interventions in world affairs in the

¹ Before 1976, foreigners with medical certificates were eligible for immigration to the United States. The 1976 Amendments to the 1965 Immigration Act required foreign medical professionals to get job offers from American companies to be eligible for immigration. They also needed to gain satisfactory scores in TOEFL to get medical licenses in the United States.

post-Cold War era.

An important aspect of the changes in Koreans' immigration mechanisms is that the proportion of family-sponsored preference immigrants, especially those based on the mechanism of U.S. citizens' siblings, decreased significantly in the 2000s, with a concomitant increase in the proportion of occupational immigrants. The proportion of Korean occupational immigrants doubled between 1991 and 1992, and continued to increase every year until it reached 60% in 2005. In all but one year between 2005 and 2009, occupational immigrants composed the majority of Korean immigrants. In every year between 1992 and 2009, the proportion of Korean employment-sponsored immigrants was much larger than that of total U.S. immigrants, by two to four times. It can safely be said that employment-sponsored immigration has replaced family-sponsored immigration as the dominant form of Korean immigration to the United States during recent years.

Table 3 compares Korean immigrants with other Asian immigrant groups in the proportions of the two highest-status specialty occupations (technical/professional and administrative/managerial). Most immigrants either reported having no occupation or did not report it when they may have actually had one. Thus immigration data seems to have overestimated immigrants' occupational statuses, because those with lower-status occupations were less likely to have reported them. Nevertheless, the data roughly reflects their occupational backgrounds. The data seem to be useful especially for the purpose of comparing different Asian immigrant groups because overestimation of occupational statuses is likely to have uniformly influenced data for all groups.

The 1990 and 2000 Censuses showed that Indian and Taiwanese immigrants had the highest occupational and educational levels among all immigrant groups, substantially higher than those of other Asian immigrant groups (Min 2006c; Rumbaut 1995). But beginning in 2000 the proportion of Korean immigrants in two specialty occupations reached 60% and slowly increased, overtaking Indians in 2006 and after. Three major factors seem to have contributed to recent Korean immigrants' exceptionally high occupational levels. First, the Immigration Act of 1990 raised the numbers of immigrants and temporary workers in specialty occupations to make U.S. corporations competitive in the global labor market. Given that the proportions of Korean and other Asian immigrants in specialty occupations have radically increased with a concomitant decline in the proportions of family-sponsored immigrants during recent years, the U.S. government seems to have taken special measures to bring highly educated immigrants

Table 3. Percentage of Immigrants in Technical/Professional and Administrative/Managerial Occupations among Asian Immigrants by Country of Birth, 1965-2009

Year	China		India		Korea		Philippines		Taiwan		Vietnam	
	Professionals and Technicians	Managerial	Professionals and Technicians	Managerial	Professionals and Technicians	Managerial	Professionals and Technicians	Managerial	Professionals and Technicians	Managerial	Professionals and Technicians	Managerial
1965	14.9	1.4	59.1	0.6	59.2	0.6	40.4	1.0	*	*	*	*
1970	50.9	0.2	88.7	0.4	68.3	0.0	65.0	3.8	*	*	51.8	0.0
1975	30.5	16.8	76.9	6.0	39.9	11.6	54.6	6.0	*	*	39.1	13.9
1979	28.2	17.4	54.2	13.8	25.5	19.0	30.7	10.1	*	*	15.5	4.8
1985	19.2	10.3	46.7	15.5	23.8	21.5	30.2	12.5	38.6	26.4	8.6	2.1
1990	18.5	11.2	35.7	18.5	22.2	18.2	33.4	12.4	35.7	30.0	4.9	1.1
1995	20.7	12.3	50.5	16.4	33.4	14.9	38.8	12.5	34.6	31.0	3.8	0.8
2000	37.6	13.2	62.9	12.0	39.0	16.7	53.9	5.8	50.0	22.4	7.9	2.4
2001	55.5	13.6	73.6	11.3	40.8	20.5	48.7	7.4	57.6	20.5	8.1	1.4
2003	26.8	12.4	58.8	13.5	38.6	18.7	49.2	7.6	41.0	37.1	9.8	2.7
2004	43.1	11.9	69.2	12.2	38.8	21.4	48.0	9.3	45.9	33.3	10.6	3.2
2005	40.2	10.5	63.2	14.2	43.7	22.4	49.8	8.8	47.4	31.8	9.8	3.0
2006	27.4		57.2		64.8		57.8		70.5			12.7
2007	33.3		68.8		69.7		49.6		71.8			12.8
2008	35.7		70.7		77.5		43.0		77.3			15.0
2009	35.4		69.4		75.4		43.6		75.2			16.6

Sources: Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports, 1965-1978* and *Statistical Yearbook, 1979-2001*; Office of Immigration Statistics, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2002-2009*.

* No data are available for Taiwanese immigrants for 1965, 1970, 1975, 1979 and Vietnamese immigrants for 1965.

* No data are available for occupations in 1980 and 2002.

and to discourage family-sponsored immigrants. Second, the rapid increase in the number of Korean international students, including early-study students, during recent years also seems to have contributed to upgrading recent Korean immigrants' occupational statuses.

As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, a significant proportion of Korean international students seem to have changed their status to permanent residents after they completed their education and found meaningful occupations in the United States. Also, the difficulty in finding professional and managerial occupations in Korea is likely to have pushed many Korean college graduates to enter the United States as temporary workers (with H1-B visa) or as occupational immigrants in specialty occupations. These two issues will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The adoption of alien orphans by American citizens has become an important mechanism for the immigration of Korean children to the United States. During the Korean War, American servicemen began to adopt Korean orphans. The adoption of Korean children by American citizens was expanded after the Korean War. Annual Reports/Yearbooks of Immigration began to include statistics on adoptees beginning in 1976. As shown in Table 4, Korean adoptees composed the majority of adoptees by American citizens between 1976 and 1985. As South Korea improved its economic conditions, the number of Korean adoptees began to decrease in 1989, but until 1994 it was the largest source country of adoptees to the United States. Beginning in 1995, China emerged as the largest source country of adoptees by American citizens, with South Korea falling to third place. Even in the 2000s, South Korea remained as one of the five largest source countries of adoptees, but the number of Korean adoptees was reduced to about 1,000 in the last two years.

Despite the significant decrease in their entry during the most recent years, Korean adoptees still compose the largest alien group of adoptees to American families. Shiao, Tuan and Riezi (2004) estimated that approximately 100,000 Korean children had been adopted by American citizens by 2000. The number of Korean adoptees seems to have increased to over 110,000 at present. But Chinese adoptees soon will outnumber Korean adoptees in the United States, as a huge number of them have annually immigrated during recent years and will continue to do so in the near future.² It seems apparent that white American citizens prefer adopting East Asian

² The one-child policy of China has recently led many Chinese parents with two or more children to give up their children for adoption by American citizens.

Table 4. Number of Korean Adoptees Admitted to the U.S. as Immigrants by Country of Birth and Five Largest Source Countries of Adoptees, 1976-2009

Year	Total Number of Adoptees	Korean Adoptees	Korean Adoptees as Percentage of Total Adoptees	The Largest Source Country	The Second Largest Source Country	The Third Largest Source Country	The Fourth Largest Source Country	The Fifth Largest Source Country
1976	8,550	4,847	56.7	Korea	Vietnam (747)	Colombia (732)	Philippines (401)	Thailand (202)
1977	6,493	3,858	59.4	Korea	Colombia (575)	Vietnam (347)	Philippines (325)	Mexico (156)
1978	5,315	3,045	57.3	Korea	Colombia (599)	Philippines (287)	India (152), Mexico (152)	
1979	4,864	2,406	49.5	Korea	Colombia (626)	Philippines (297)	India (231)	Austria (141)
1980	5,139	2,683	52.2	Korea	Colombia (653)	Philippines (253)	India (319)	El Salvador (179)
1981	4,868	2,444	50.2	Korea	Colombia (628)	Philippines (278)	India (314)	El Salvador (224)
1982	5,749	3,254	56.6	Korea	Colombia (534)	Philippines (345)	India (409)	El Salvador (199)
1983	7,127	4,412	61.9	Korea	Colombia (608)	Philippines (302)	India (409)	El Salvador (240)
1984	8,327	5,157	61.9	Korea	Colombia (595)	Philippines (408)	India (314)	El Salvador (224)
1985	9,286	5,694	61.3	Korea	Colombia (622)	Philippines (515)	India (496)	El Salvador (310)
1989	7,948	3,552	44.7	Korea	Colombia (735)	India (677)	Philippines (481)	Peru (269)
1990	7,088	2,603	36.7	Korea	Colombia (628)	Peru (441)	Philippines (423)	India (361)
1991	9,008	1,817	20.2	Romania (2,552)	Korea	Peru (722)	Colombia (527)	India (448)
1992	6,536	1,787	27.3	Korea	Soviet Union (432)	Guatemala (423)	Colombia (403)	Philippines (353)
1993	7,348	1,765	24.0	Korea	Russia (695)	Guatemala (512)	Colombia (416)	Paraguay (405)
1994	8,200	1,757	21.4	Korea	Russia (1,324)	China (748)	Paraguay (497)	Guatemala (431)
1995	9,384	1,570	16.7	China (2,049)	Russia (1,684)	Korea	Guatemala (436)	India (368)
1996	11,316	1,580	13.9	China (3,318)	Russia (2,328)	Korea	Romania (554)	Guatemala (420)

Table 4. (Continued)

Year	Total Number of Adoptees	Korean Adoptees	Korean Adoptees as Percentage of Total Adoptees	The Largest Source Country	The Second Largest Source Country	The Third Largest Source Country	The Fourth Largest Source Country	The Fifth Largest Source Country
1997	12,596	1,506	11.9	Russia (3,626)	China (3,295)	Korea	Guatemala (725)	Romania (558)
1998	14,867	1,705	11.5	Russia (4,320)	China (3,988)	Korea	Guatemala (938)	India (462)
1999	16,037	1,956	12.2	Russia (4,250)	China (4,009)	Korea	Guatemala (987)	Romania (887)
2000	18,120	1,711	9.4	China (4,943)	Russia (4,210)	Korea	Guatemala (1,504)	Romania (1,103)
2001	19,087	1,863	9.8	China (4,629)	Russia (4,210)	Korea	Guatemala (1,601)	Ukraine (1,227)
2002	21,100	1,713	8.1	China (6,062)	Russia (4,904)	Guatemala (2,361)	Korea	Ukraine (1,093)
2003	21,320	1,793	8.4	China (6,638)	Russia (5,134)	Guatemala (2,327)	Korea	Kazakhstan (819)
2004	22,911	1,708	7.5	China (7,033)	Russia (5,878)	Guatemala (3,252)	Korea	Kazakhstan (824)
2005	22,710	1,604	7.1	China (7,939)	Russia (4,652)	Guatemala (3,748)	Korea	Ukraine (841)
2006	20,705	1,381	6.7	China (6,520)	Guatemala (4,093)	Russia (3,710)	Korea	Ethiopia (711)
2007	19,471	945	4.9	China (5,397)	Guatemala (4,721)	Russia (2,301)	Ethiopia (1,203)	Korea
2008	17,229	1,038	6.0	Guatemala (4,082)	China (3,852)	Russia (1,859)	Ethiopia (1,666)	Korea
2009	12,782	1,106	8.7	China (2,990)	Ethiopia (2,221)	Russia (1,580)	Korea	Guatemala (773)
Total	371,481	74,260	19.99	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook, 1979-2001*; Office of Immigration Statistics, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2002-2009*.

* Data on adoptees are not available for 1986-1988.

children over other groups of children, which is why so many Korean and Chinese children have been adopted.

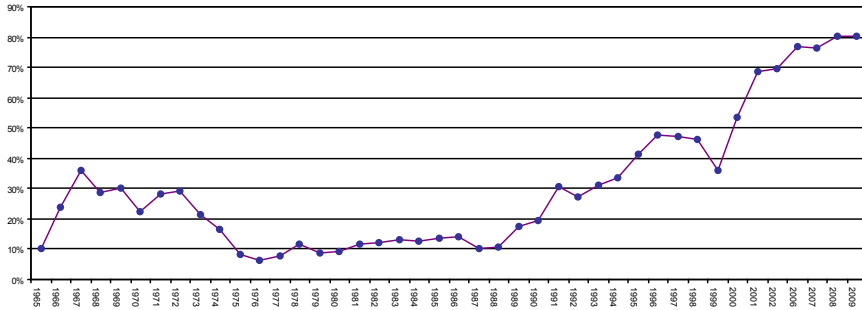
Figure 1 shows the change over time in the proportion of Korean female immigrants between 1965 and 2009. Women composed over 80% of all Korean immigrants in 1965, but it continued to decline, reaching less than 60% in 1975. We can explain women's overrepresentation among Korean immigrants by looking at particular mechanisms of Korean immigration, which is why this topic is discussed in this section.

Women composed the vast majority of Korean immigrants in the latter half of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s because wives of U.S. servicemen, adoptees, and nurses made up the majority of Korean immigrants during the period. But, as previously noted, these three groups of Korean immigrants grew smaller and smaller as time passed. Korean immigrants maintained a complete gender balance in 1981, but the proportion of women hovered around 55% between 1982 and 2009.

Two major factors seem to have contributed to the slight numerical advantage of Korean female immigrants over male immigrants during recent years. First, as noted in Table 4, although reduced significantly during recent years, more than 1,000 Korean adoptees continued to annually immigrate to the United States in the 1990s and 2000s. About two-thirds of Korean adoptees are girls, which contributes to the moderate gender imbalance in favor of women among Korean immigrants. The other important contributing factor is a greater tendency of Korean women both in Korea and in the United States to marry non-Korean partners. Korean women's marriages to U.S. servicemen in Korea have been drastically reduced during recent years, as Korea has made a significant improvement in economic conditions. Also, the U.S. forces in South Korea have been scaled down to less than 20,000. However, many women in Korea have married American citizens in Korea and some of them have immigrated to the United States. Also, regardless of their generation, far more Korean American women than men have married non-Korean partners (Min and Kim 2009). This means that more Korean American men than women have brought their spouses from Korea.

The Radical Increase in the Proportion of Status Adjusters

Annual immigrants in the United States consist of two groups: (1) new arrivals and (2) status adjusters. Status adjusters are those who entered the



Sources: Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports*, 1965-1978 and *Statistical Yearbook*, 1979-2001; Office of Immigration Statistics, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, 2002-2009.

* Data on status adjusters are not available for 2003~2005.

Fig. 2. Percentage of Status Adjusters among Korean Immigrants (by Country of Birth), 1965-2009.

United States previously on another, non-immigrant status and changed their status to permanent residents in a given year. New arrivals are those who have been admitted as immigrants to the United States directly from a particular source country. Figure 2 shows changes over the years in the proportion of status adjusters among Korean immigrants.

Status adjusters comprised 20% to 35% of annual Korean immigrants during the period between 1967 and 1972. But the proportion declined gradually, reaching the lowest proportion (about 5%) in 1976. The 1967-1972 Korean immigrants included a fairly high proportion of status adjusters mainly because many Korean professionals, especially medical professionals, who had received graduate degrees or internships in the United States, legalized their status to permanent residents using the Preference 3 category of the Immigration Act of 1965. But the percentage of status-adjusted Korean immigrants decreased in the 1970s and 1980s because many state governments' laws in the early 1970s and ultimately the 1976 Amendments to the Immigration Act of 1965 made it difficult for professionals to immigrate to the United States. The financial crisis in the mid-1970s in the United States led U.S. policymakers to take measures to make it difficult for alien professionals to legalize as immigrants. Lobbies by medical professional associations also contributed to the change.

The percentage of status adjusters among Korean immigrants gradually increased beginning in 1988 and skyrocketed in the new century. The radical

Table 5. Percentage of Status Adjusters among Korean Immigrants (by Country of Birth) Compared to Others by Region of Origin, 2009

	Number of Total Immigrants	Number of Status Adjusters	Percentage of Status Adjusters
Korea	25,859	20,805	80.5
Asia	413,312	229,293	55.5
The Caribbean	146,127	76,345	52.3
Latin America	150,746	100,899	66.9
All Countries	1,130,818	667,776	59.1

Source: Office of Immigration Statistics, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, 2009.

increase in the 1990s and later seems to have been due mainly to the fact that many Korean international students changed their status after completion of their education in the United States. The 1990 Immigration Act tripled the number of professional and managerial immigrants. This act made it easier for Korean and other Asian international students to legally become permanent residents when they completed their undergraduate or graduate education.

As a result of globalization, the percentage of status adjusters has increased over the years for almost all major immigrant groups. But Table 5 shows that Korean immigrants have a substantially larger proportion of status adjusters (81%) than total immigrants to the United States (59%) and all Asian immigrants (56%). We need to explain why over 80% of recent Korean immigrants consist of status adjusters, compared to only about 55% for other major immigrant groups.

There seem to be two major reasons for an extremely high proportion of status-adjusters among Korean immigrants during recent years. One is the presence of a huge number of Korean international students in the United States, many of whom change their status after completion of their undergraduate and/or graduate education here. The other reason is the presence of many Korean short-term or long-term visitors to the United States, many of whom also change their status to permanent residents. The presence of extremely large numbers of Korean students and non-student visitors in the United States relative to the Korean population is possible mainly because of the strong long-term ties between the United States and South Korea.

As shown in Table 6, the number of international students enrolled in U.S. undergraduate and graduate programs steadily increased since 1995,

Table 6. Annual Number of International Students for Top Three Countries of Origin

Year	Total Number of International Students in the US	Annual Number of Chinese Students		Annual Number of Indian Students		Annual Number of Korean Students	
	(A)	(B)		(C)		(D)	
		N	% of (A)	N	% of (A)	N	% of (A)
1995/96	453,787	39,613	8.7%	31,743	7.0%	not available	-
1996/97	457,984	42,503	9.3%	30,641	6.7%	not available	-
1997/98	481,280	46,958	9.8%	33,818	7.0%	42,890	8.9%
1998/99	490,933	51,001	10.4%	37,482	7.6%	39,199	8.0%
1999/00	514,723	54,466	10.6%	42,337	8.2%	41,191	8.0%
2000/01	547,867	59,939	10.9%	54,664	10.0%	45,685	8.3%
2001/02	582,996	63,211	10.8%	66,836	11.5%	49,046	8.4%
2002/03	586,323	64,757	11.0%	74,603	12.7%	51,519	8.8%
2003/04	572,509	61,765	10.8%	79,736	13.9%	52,484	9.2%
2004/05	565,039	62,523	11.1%	80,466	14.2%	53,358	9.4%
2005/06	564,766	62,582	11.1%	76,503	13.5%	59,022	10.5%
2006/07	582,984	67,723	11.6%	83,833	14.4%	62,392	10.7%
2007/08	623,805	81,127	13.0%	94,563	15.2%	69,124	11.1%
2008/09	671,616	98,235	14.6%	103,260	15.4%	75,065	11.2%
2009/10	690,923	127,628	18.5%	104,897	15.2%	72,153	10.4%

Source: Institute of International Education.

reaching 72,000 in 2009. Including their family members, it is estimated that approximately 86,400 Korean international students were enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities in 2009.³ South Korea is not far behind China and India in the number of international students, although the total Chinese and Indian populations are much larger than the Korean population, by more than 20 times, respectively. The statistics give us an idea of the overrepresentation of Korean international students in the United States. Korean students' visits to foreign countries for undergraduate and postgraduate education are not limited to the United States. There are large numbers of Korean college students in other English-speaking countries, such as Canada, Australia, and Great Britain. English-language skills and the rank of the college are probably the two most important factors for the job market in Korea. Thus parents are anxious to send their children to English-speaking countries for their children's college education as an alternative to a college education in second- or third-class colleges in Korea.

Statistics on international students in Table 6 do not include early-study students who came to the United States for elementary and secondary education. As shown in Table 7, more than 25,000 Korean elementary- and secondary-school students left Korea annually for studies abroad during recent years. Nearly 5,000 additional elementary- and secondary-school students also left Korea annually, accompanied by their parents who were

³ On average, one Korean international student has 1.2 household members including themselves.

Table 7. Annual Number of Korean Elementary and Secondary Students Who Went Abroad for Study

Year	Elementary-school Students	Middle-school Students	High-school Students	Total Number of Students
2003	4,052	3,674	2,772	10,498
2004	6,276	5,568	4,602	16,446
2005	8,148	6,670	5,582	20,400
2006	13,814	9,246	6,451	29,511
2007	12,341	9,201	6,126	27,668
2008	12,531	8,888	5,930	27,349
2009	8,369	5,723	4,026	18,118

Sources: Center for Education Statistics, Korean Educational Development Institute, 2008 (Statistics on Elementary and Secondary School Students Who Went Abroad; <http://cesi.kedi.re.kr>).

dispatched abroad as exchange visitors, trainers, temporary workers or intra-company transferees. About one-third of early-study and parent-accompanied students (about 9,000 each year) seem to have come to the United States annually (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology 2010). Early-study students include those who came here with their mothers while their fathers stayed to earn a living in Korea. These internationally-split families are commonly referred to as *kirogi gazok* (geese families). Most early-study students return to Korea after a few years of education in the United States. But a significant proportion of them continue to stay here for a college education. When we include these early-study students, the total number of Korean international students and their family members in the United States in 2009 may have been over 110,000. They account for more than 11% of Korean immigrants in this country.⁴

A huge number of Korean international students contributed to the presence of an unusually large number of temporary residents in the Korean immigrant community. Korean international students who have completed their education in the United States have an advantage over college graduates in Korea in finding specialty occupations here. As shown in the previous section, the proportion of Korean occupational immigrants (and their family members) has increased since 1988, becoming the majority of annual Korean

⁴ It is estimated that single-race Korean Americans composed approximately 1.4 million in 2009. Assuming about 70% of Korean Americans were immigrants, there were approximately one million Korean immigrants in the year.

immigrants since 2005 (see Table 2). Consistently, the proportion of Korean professional and managerial immigrants has steadily increased since 1990 (see Table 3). Moreover, many other Korean international students are likely to have become permanent residents through their marriages to Korean or non-Korean partners in the United States. Those Koreans who came to the United States at early ages and completed their undergraduate or graduate education here are more likely to change their status to live here permanently than Korean adult international students. Accordingly, the proportion of Korean status adjusters may comprise a higher proportion in the coming years.

The presence of many other Korean non-student visitors also contributes to the exceptionally high proportion of Korean status-adjusted immigrants. Due to close U.S.-Korean relationships, huge numbers of non-student Koreans visit the United States each year and many of them stay as temporary residents for short or extended periods of time. These non-immigrant and non-student temporary residents include exchange scholars and trainees, temporary workers, visitors for businesses or sightseeing, and intra-company transferees with their family members. Table 8 shows that there were less than 5,000 Korean visitors to the United States in 1965. But the number rapidly increased, jumping to over 100,000 in 1985 and reaching almost 700,000 in 1995. It rose to 900,000 in 2009. The U.S. government accepted South Korea as a visa-waiver country in 2008. That most likely encouraged more Koreans to visit the United States. But economic recessions (in both South Korea and the United States) in 2008 and 2009 seem to have had a neutralizing effect on the visa-waiving advantage for Koreans' travels to the United States. More than one million Koreans are likely to have visited the United States in 2010, as the economy had improved in both countries.

Members of all non-immigrant temporary resident groups have the potential to be status-adjusted immigrants in the future. Many Korean international students find jobs as temporary workers when they complete their undergraduate or graduate education, and then become permanent residents by legalizing their status through sponsorships by their employers. Middle-aged and elderly family members who were invited by their immigrant children can apply for green cards when their children become naturalized. Moreover, members of all groups of temporary residents can change their status to permanent residents by marrying Korean or non-Korean partners here.

The Immigration Act of 1990 raised not only the number of professional and managerial immigrants, but also the number of temporary workers

Table 8. Number of Korean Visitors (Non-immigrants) to the U.S., 1965–2009

	Year	Number of Korean Non-Immigrant Visitors	Number of Temporary Workers in Specialty Occupations
By Country of Birth	1965	4,717	92
	1970	13,171	12
	1975	30,554	91
	1979	41,982	104
By Country of Citizenship	1985	115,361	221
	1990	278,842	1,008
	1995	673,272	1,674
	1996	849,581	1,934
	1998	519,898	2,595
	1999	605,225	4,015
	2000	807,198	5,647
	2001	841,863	6,887
	2002	804,403	8,000
	2003	840,142	8,550
	2004	829,031	9,111
	2005	876,554	10,041
	2006	942,341	11,370
	2007	1,028,253	11,479
	2008	1,007,466	9,956
2009	906,006	8,719	

Sources: Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Reports*, 1965-1978 and *Statistical Yearbook*, 1979-2001; Office of Immigration Statistics, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, 2002-2009.

* Data on non-immigrants are not available for 1980, 1997.

(H-1B) in the same high-status occupations up to 195,000.⁵ Computer-based professional occupations make up the majority of temporary-work specialty occupations. As shown in Table 8, Korean immigrants included a small number of temporary workers in the early years. But the number jumped to over 5,000 in 2000 and continued to increase until it reached over 11,000 in 2007. South Korea has become one of the six or seven top source countries of temporary workers in the United States in specialty occupations, following

⁵ The U.S. government raised the number of temporary workers in specialty occupations in order to help American corporations become globally competitive by hiring needed workers in particular specialty areas quickly on a temporary basis and cheaply, and then discard them easily when they do not need them.

India, China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Germany, and Canada.

Some H-1B temporary workers came directly from Korea to the United States. Others are international students in the United States who have changed their status to temporary workers. Still other temporary workers previously entered the United States as visitors for sightseeing and may have received temporary work visas. The implication of the increase in Korean temporary workers in specialty occupations is that temporary workers can change their status to permanent residents more easily than other groups of Korean temporary residents. Considering that such large numbers of temporary visas were given to Koreans in the decade of the 2000s, the immigration flow of Koreans in the 2010s is likely to rise beyond the 2009 level of 25,000.

Summary and Conclusion

To summarize changes over time in patterns of Koreans' immigration to the United States, the annual number of Korean immigrants gradually increased for the first ten years, reached the peak between 1976 and 1990, gradually decreased in the 1990s, and slightly increased in the 2000s again. Lack of job opportunities, difficulties in sending their children to colleges, and political and social instability served as major push factors for Koreans' mass emigration to the United States up to 1980s. Significant improvements in economic, political and social conditions in South Korea contributed to the reduction of Koreans' immigration to the United States in the 1990s. But the advantage of getting an English-language college education still remains a very important pull factor for Koreans' massive immigration and non-immigrant movement to the United States. In addition, the close U.S.-Korean military, political and economic linkages become a major factor that explains why South Korea sent the second largest immigrant group next to the Philippines among Asian countries between 1976 and 1990. And the movement of so many Koreans to the United States under the impact of globalization best explains a moderate increase in the Korean immigration flow in the 2000s.

At the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, professionals, especially medical professionals, composed a significant proportion of Korean immigrants. But the proportion decreased as the U.S. government took measures in 1976 to make it more difficult for professionals to immigrate. But, as Korean immigrants admitted in the late 1960s and early 1970s became naturalized

citizens, they were able to invite their siblings for permanent residence in the United States, gradually increasing the proportion of Korean family-sponsored immigrants. However, as the Immigration Act of 1990 raised the number of professional and managerial immigrants by three times, the proportion of Korean immigrants in these specialty occupations gradually increased with a concomitant decrease in the proportion of family-sponsored Korean immigrants. Professional and managerial immigrants and their family members comprised the majority of Korean immigrants in four of the last five years. Korean international students who completed their education in the United States and college graduates in Korea fill up immigration quotas for specialty occupations. The immigration of large numbers of well-educated Koreans in specialty occupations during recent years has upgraded the socioeconomic background of Korean immigrants.

Korean international students enrolled in colleges and universities, early-study students, exchange visitors, employees of American branches of Korean firms, and other visitors comprise a much larger proportion of the Korean population in the United States now than thirty years ago. As a result, more than 80% of the 2009 Korean immigrants were status adjusters from these temporary resident statuses. The prevalence of status adjusters among Korean immigrants compared to other immigrant groups suggests that the Korean community has more non-immigrant temporary residents in proportion to the population size. Two interrelated factors, technological advances and globalization, have contributed to the radical increase in the non-immigrant temporary resident population for all U.S. immigrant groups. But due to the close military, political, economic and cultural linkages between the United States and South Korea, the Korean immigrant community seems to have a substantially larger proportion of temporary residents than other Asian communities.

The Koreans who legalized their status to permanent residents through employment-sponsored categories in specialty occupations during recent years are generally young, with most of them having completed their undergraduate and/or graduate education in the United States. These young Korean immigrant work forces, unlike U.S.-born second-generation Koreans, are fluent in Korean and practice Korean culture actively here, while they are also fluent in English. As a result, the Korean community has many fluently bilingual young people who can bridge the gap between the middle-aged immigrant generation and the American-born second generation. The proportion of this fluently bilingual young immigrant generation is likely to continue to increase in the future. Moreover, the presence of so many

international students and other temporary residents, in addition to these young fluently bilingual immigrants, has helped the Korean community maintain far more transnational ties with South Korea than before. Of course, technological advances are the other important contributing factor to Korean Americans' strong transnational ties to South Korea.

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