
Younger-Generation Korean Experiences in the United States is an edited anthology that compares two different cohorts of Korean Americans in the formation of ethnic and racial identities using thirteen personal essays written by 1.5-generation and second-generation Korean Americans. The first cohort grew up in the 1960s and early 1970s while the second cohort grew up in the 1980s and early 1990s. Each of the essays explores four influential factors of ethnic identity formation: (1) retention of ethnic culture versus adaptation into mainstream American culture, (2) participation in ethnic social networks, (3) connections/links to the mother country or lack thereof, and (4) experiences with racial prejudice and discrimination. The first three factors pertain to internal factors while the last one is an external factor.

The great increase in the Korean population in the United States, the accompanying increase in ethnic and social service organizations, and South Korea’s emergence as an economic and cultural power contributed to the later cohort’s greater retention of their cultural heritage compared to the earlier cohort. The substantial decrease in racism against Asian Americans also contributed to the second cohort’s acceptance of Korean-American ethnic identity more comfortably than the first cohort.

Although there is a great deal of academic literature on ethnic identity and the “new second-generation” children of post-1965 immigrants to the U.S., there are very few books that use personal narratives as the primary mechanism to explore these sociological topics. Furthermore, this book makes a particularly significant contribution to studies of 1.5- and second-generation ethnic identity formation since it contains essays by two different cohorts of Korean Americans, all of whom addressed similar points of comparison. This book will be useful and interesting to both scholars and lay readers, particularly to U.S.-born children of immigrants.

Praise for Younger-Generation Korean Experiences in the United States:

“Younger-Generation Korean Experiences in the United States is, no doubt, a must-read for anyone interested in the subject of 1.5- and second-generations’ ethnic identity formation . . . All readers will find the personal narratives of the second generation’s journey of ethnic identity development moving and thought-provoking
—Rebecca Y. Kim, Pepperdine University, from Amerasia Journal

“By presenting the voices of Korean Americans—in fascinating and often moving personal narratives that explore identities, networks, and links to South Korea—this book enriches our understanding of the second-generation experience.”
—Nancy Foner, Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York

“Comparing the experiences of Korean American youth in two different time periods, this unique and insightful book examines the ways in which internal and external factors have contributed to different ethnic and racial identity formations. Drawing on personal narratives, this book is immanently engaging, and thus will appeal to a broad audience of scholars and students, as well as the public at large.”
—Mehdi Bozorgmehr, City College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York
“This is a wonderfully informative study of the complex phenomenon of ethnic identity among Korean Americans. The detailed qualitative analysis reveals the significance of historical context, social ties, and experiences with racial prejudice. This book should be of interest to anyone who wishes to understand the formation of Asian American ethnic identities.”
—Arthur Sakamoto, Texas A&M University

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