

Statistics on Korean Americans' Marriage and the Family

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Marital Patterns

Before I discuss the statistics presented in Table 1 on Korean Americans' marital patterns, I need to clarify the concepts involved. When Korean Americans get married, they can marry Korean partners or non-Korean partners. When having Korean partners, they can be said to be in-married. Those with non-Korean partners can be said to be out-married or intermarried. When they marry Korean partners, they can have three different types of marriages depending on the generation of their partners. Korean immigrants can marry other Korean immigrant partners. They can also marry 1.5-generation Korean partners, which refers to those who were born in Korea and immigrated to the U.S. at early ages (age 12 or before). Or they can marry native-born partners, who are most likely to be second-generation Koreans. When Korean immigrants marry 1.5- or native-born Korean partners, we can say they engage in cross-generational in-marriages because they marry across generations. We (myself and Chigon Kim) first used the concept "cross-generational in-marriage" in our article published in 2009 ("Patterns of In-marriages and Inter-marriages among Native-Born Asian Americans," *International Migration Review* 2009). Cross-generational marriage is a very important sociological concept because of its practical implications. For example, for Korean immigrants, cross-generational in-marriage helps them to learn English and American culture faster, while for native-born Koreans, cross-generational in-marriage gives them advantages in retaining the Korean language and culture.

It is also useful to classify Korean Americans' intermarriage into the following three types, depending upon their partners' race. They can marry white partners, partners of other racial minorities (black, Hispanic or Pacific Islander), or other Asian partners like Chinese or Indians. This classification of intermarriage is also useful because the three types of intermarriage have different causes and consequences. For example, Korean immigrants who

have other minority partners may be subjected to racial prejudice more often than those who have white partners. Second-generation Koreans with other Asian marital partners, especially their children, are likely to have strong pan-Asian identity.

Now that I have clarified some of the concepts and background information, let us now examine some statistics on Korean Americans' marital patterns in Table 1. Since the statistics in the table are based on the 2006-2008 American Community Surveys (1% sample collected in each of those three years), they reflect the most recent trend in Korean Americans' marital patterns. Looking at first-generation Korean immigrants' marital patterns, only 3% of Korean male immigrants engage in intermarriage, compared to 23% of their female counterparts. Korean immigrant men have the lowest intermarriage rate among all Asian immigrant groups (Liang and Ito 1999). Korean immigrant women have a much higher intermarriage rate than men, partly because many of them married American servicemen in Korea and subsequently immigrated to the U.S. when their husbands completed their military service in Korea. Also, far more Korean immigrant women have married non-Korean partners, mostly white partners, in the U.S. than Korean immigrant men, probably because they expect to maintain more egalitarian marital relations with non-Korean partners. We can see that the vast majority of Korean immigrants with non-Korean partners have white partners.

Table 1 reveals that the majority (53%) of 1.5-generation Koreans engage in intermarriage. Since they came to this country at such an early age, they are fluent in English and well assimilated to American culture. Thus it is easy for 1.5-generation Koreans to date and marry non-Korean partners. Again, we find a significant gender difference in the intermarriage rate. 65% of 1.5-generation Korean women, compared to 37% of their male counterparts, are

married to non-Korean partners. As expected, more than 70% of 1.5-generation intermarried Koreans are married to white partners.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of In-marriage and Inter-marriage among Married Korean Americans by Generation and Sex, 2006-2008

Marital Pattern	First Generation Korean			1.5 Generation Korean			Native-Born Korean		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
In-marriage	(85.5)	(96.8)	(76.5)	(47.4)	(62.9)	(35.3)	(38.8)	(45.1)	(33.2)
First generation Korean Spouse	80.1	92.0	70.6	27.0	38.5	18.0	10.0	14.3	6.1
1.5 generation Korean spouse	4.4	4.0	4.7	16.4	19.4	14.0	6.6	6.8	6.4
Native-born Korean Spouse	1.0	.8	1.2	4.1	5.0	3.3	22.2	24.0	20.6
Inter-marriage	(14.5)	(3.2)	(23.5)	(52.6)	(37.1)	(64.7)	(61.2)	(54.9)	(66.8)
Non-Hispanic white Spouse	10.7	1.3	18.2	38.3	23.4	50.0	38.9	32.5	44.6
Other racial minority Spouse	1.8	.5	2.8	6.2	5.9	6.4	12.2	11.2	13.1
Other Asian spouse	2.0	1.4	2.5	8.0	7.8	8.2	10.1	11.1	9.1

Source: 2006-2008 American Community Surveys from IPUMS (Ruggles et al. 2008c).

Note: Numbers represent cell percentages in three-way contingency tables with generation, gender, and marital patterns.

Moving to native-born Korean Americans' marital patterns, we find that 61% of them are intermarried. A slightly higher proportion of native-born Koreans than 1.5-generation Koreans (53%) engage in intermarriage. However, we are surprised more by the similarity in intermarriage rate between the two younger generations than by the difference. Considering that native-born Koreans include a significant proportion of Korean Americans who belong to the third or higher generations, we expect to find that they have a substantially higher intermarriage rate. 1.5-generation Koreans are far more similar to native-born Koreans not only in intermarriage rate, but also in socioeconomic characteristics (see Oh and Min 2011). Whereas there is a huge gender difference in the intermarriage rate of 1.5-generation Koreans, there is not much of a gender difference in the intermarriage rate for native-born Koreans. 55% of native-

born Korean men, compared to 69% of native Korean women, have non-Korean partners. Consistently in all three generations, more than 70% of intermarried Koreans are married to white partners.

The great tendency of younger-generation Korean Americans to marry white partners can be explained by two major factors. In terms of sheer numbers, more white partners are available to younger-generation Koreans for dating and marriage. Also, Korean and white Americans tend to have similar socioeconomic backgrounds. 1.5- and second-generation Koreans can meet white partners easily in their schools, work places, and neighborhoods. The high intermarriage between the two groups also suggests that Korean Americans are well accepted by white Americans.

First-generation Korean immigrants have not only a very low intermarriage rate, but also a low cross-generational marriage rate. Only 4% of them have 1.5-generation partners and another 1% has native-born partners. But cross-generational marriage occurs more frequently for 1.5-generation and native-born Koreans; a much higher proportion of 1.5-generation Koreans have immigrant partners (27%) than 1.5-generation partners (16%). This seems to be due mainly to the fact that far more Korean immigrants are available as 1.5-generation Koreans' marital partners than 1.5-generation Koreans themselves.

The majority of in-married native-born Koreans are married to other native-born Koreans. As much as 46% of them are married to first-generation Korean immigrants or 1.5-generation Koreans. But many native-born Koreans married to other native-born Koreans are likely to engage in cross-generational in-marriage. For example, some second-generation Koreans are likely to be married to third- or even fourth-generation Koreans. Since census data do not provide information about the respondents' generational status, we cannot tell based on data. Accordingly, we can presume that the majority of native-born Koreans engage in a cross-

generational in-marriage. Second-generation and 1.5-generation Koreans married to Korean immigrants have an advantage in maintaining the Korean language and Korean customs. Not only can these native-born Koreans learn the Korean language and culture from their partners at home on a daily basis, but also occasionally from their partners' immigrant social networks. In contrast, the relatively small number of second-generation Koreans married to third- or fourth-generation partners are likely to achieve assimilation more quickly after marriage.

Korean Immigrants' Family Characteristics

Korean immigrant families are likely to be different from families in Korea because they have experienced changes in family characteristics in the process of their adaptation to American society. But their families are also likely to be somewhat different from native-born white families because they preserve many Korean family characteristics. Accordingly, in order to understand Korean immigrants' family characteristics more accurately, we need to make two-way comparisons of their families with families in Korea on the one hand and with native-born non-Hispanic white families on the other hand. In Table 2, I have made the two-way comparisons based on U.S. and Korean census data.

There were radical differences in family characteristics between South Korea and the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. Americans had a much higher proportion of single-person households, a much lower rate of three-generation families, a much higher divorce rate, and a much higher rate of married women's participation in the labor market than Koreans in Korea. To put it simply, Korean families were far more traditional than American families in the 1970s and 1980s, when a large number of Korean immigrants were annually admitted to the U.S. This means that Koreans who immigrated during the two decades experienced radical changes in their

family characteristics, which is why I gave the title, *Changes and Conflicts: Korean Immigrant Families in New York*, to the book published in 1998.

However, there have been radical changes in family characteristics and women's roles in South Korea since the early 2000s. The divorce rate has skyrocketed, the fertility rate has declined below the replacement level, most elderly people live separately from their children, and the labor force participation rate of married women has significantly increased in South Korea. This means that Korean families are far more similar to American families now than they were twenty years ago, although the former still have more traditional elements than the latter. It suggests that Korean immigrants who have come to the U.S. during recent years have not experienced radical changes in their family systems.

With this background information, we can proceed to Table 2. Statistics in the table reveal that, in terms of family size, Korean immigrant families are overall slightly more modern than families in Korea, but more traditional than native-born white families. Yet Korean immigrants are more similar to Koreans in Korea than to white Americans in terms of family size. Korean and Korean immigrant households have substantially lower proportions of single-person households than white households. This is due to the following two factors. First, in both Korea and the Korean immigrant community, more unmarried adult children live with their parents compared to their white American counterparts. Also, more Korean widowed elderly people live with their adult children than their white elderly counterparts. Korean and Korean immigrant families include the same number of non-nuclear family members (0.2 person per family), but both groups have twice as many non-nuclear family members as native-born white families (0.1 per family). The three groups do not have much difference in terms of the percentages of married-couple families and female-headed households.

The indicator of divorce suggests that Korean immigrant men are similar to men in Korea in divorce rate, but both have a much lower divorce rate than white American men. However, Korean immigrant women have twice as high a divorce rate as women in Korea and as Korean immigrant men. The radical gender difference in the indicator of divorce for Korean immigrants is due mainly to the fact that Korean women married to U.S. servicemen, composing a large proportion of Korean immigrant women, have an exceptionally high divorce rate (Kim 1972). It is also important to note that the much lower divorce indicator of women in Korea is due to the fact that they tend to get married later in life than white American women and even Korean immigrant women. In 2005, the mean age of women's first marriage in Korea was 28 (Korean National Statistical Office 2005: 191), compared to about 24 in the United States.

Under the impact of Confucian traditions, married women in Korea usually stayed at home as full-time housewives. Until 1990, the labor force participation rate of married women had remained low, which was unusual for an economically advanced country. But the rate has gradually increased during recent years, with about 40% of married women in Korea participating in the labor force in 2005. Korean immigrant women are far more active in their economic role. Table 2, based on the 2005 American Community Survey, shows that 50% of Korean immigrant married women participated in the labor force, a substantially lower rate than native-born white American women (59%). I believe this is an underestimation of the actual labor force participation rate of Korean immigrant women. The vast majority of Korean immigrant women work in the Korean ethnic economy, either as business owners or as employees of co-ethnic businesses (Min 1997). Many Korean women who work for their family businesses or co-ethnic businesses may not have reported their work to the 2005 American Community Survey.

Table 2: Selected Family Characteristics of Native-Born White, Korean Immigrant, and Korean Populations, 2005

Characteristics	1990			2005		
				Non-Hispanic White	Korean Immigrant	Korean in Korea
Average number of persons per household				2.4	2.6	2.9
Average number of persons per family				2.9	3.2	3.4
Percent of single-person households				28.4	22.6	20.0
Average number of children per family				1.0	1.1	1.3
Average number of nonnuclear family members per family				.1	.2	.2
Percent of married-couple families				81.0	79.7	79.5
Percent of female-headed families				13.6	12.4	13.2
Percent of having own children in married-couple families				49.6	66.5	75.3
Number of divorced men per 1,000 men 15 years old and over				96	31	28
Number of divorced women per 1,000 women 15 years old and over				119	66	32
Percent of labor force participation among urban women, 16 years old and over				58.8	50.9	48.5
Percent of labor force participation among urban married women, 16 years old and over				59.2	50.1	39.1
Number of children ever born per 1,000 women 25-34 years old	1,233	1,088	1,387	1,193	--	834
Number of children ever born per 1,000 women 35-44 years old	1,849	1,783	2,513	1,764	--	1,799

For many sources used for this table, see Pyong Gap Min and Chigon Kim, "The Korean American Family," in *Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variation*, edited by Roosevelt Wright, Jr. et al., pp.148-198 (Pearson 2012).

In 1990, Korean women in Korea 25-34 years old had a higher fertility rate than native-born white American women. Korean immigrant women had a low fertility rate, not only compared to women in Korea, but also compared to white American women. This was due to Korean immigrant women's increased economic role in the U.S., which made it difficult for them to raise two or more children. When we compare the older age group, women 35-44 years old, Korean immigrant women had a much lower fertility rate (1.8 children per woman) than women in South Korea (2.5 children per woman). They had even a lower fertility rate than native-born white American women (almost 2). The relatively low fertility rate of Korean immigrant women in 1990 seems to have been due mainly to their active economic role, which

included long work hours every week in family businesses or as employees of co-ethnic businesses (Min 1997).

In comparing the fertility rates of the three groups of women in 2005, the most important change over time from 1990 to 2005 was a radical reduction of the fertility rate in South Korea. Women in South Korea for the 25-34 years old group had an exceptionally low fertility rate, 834 for 1,000 women, less than one child per woman. This is a substantially lower fertility rate than Korean immigrant women (almost 1,200) and a much lower fertility rate than white American women (about 1,850). A very low fertility in South Korea, combined with the tendency of women to marry later in life (as noted above), were two of the main factors in this low fertility rate. Looking at the older age group (women 35-44 years old), women in Korea had a higher fertility rate than Korean immigrant women. This can be explained by a higher class background (educational level) of Korean immigrant women than women in Korea for that age group. But we can find that both Korean women and Korean immigrant women had lower fertility rates than white American women.

Elderly Korean Immigrants

Elderly Korean immigrants comprised less than 5% of the Korean population in the U.S. in 1990, as Korean immigrants drew largely from the young and middle-aged population in Korea. The proportion of elderly people among Korean immigrants increased to 10% in 2005. But it is a much lower proportion of white elderly people (14%) in the same year. The rapid increase in the proportion of the elderly immigration population is due to two factors: (1) the increase in the immigration of elderly Koreans, and (2) the aging of Korean immigrants who came to the U.S. at earlier ages.

Table 3: Living Arrangements of White, Korean-Immigrant, and Korean Elderly Persons

Living Arrangement	Non-Hispanic White	Korean-Immigrant	Korean in Korea
All elderly persons	30,153,332 (100.0)	101,289 (100.0)	4,365,218 (100.0)
Living as a family householder or his/her spouse	57.2	51.1	56.6
Living in his/her own child's family	5.1	22.8	22.4
Living in a family of a relative other than his/her own child	1.3	2.2	1.1
Living in a family of a nonrelative	.3	1.2	.4
Living in a nonfamily household	2.6	2.7	.4
Living alone	28.3	16.5	17.9
Living in a group quarter	5.2	3.5	1.1

Source: 2006 American Community Surveys from IPUMS and (Ruggles et al. 2008b) and 2005 National Population and Housing Census of Korea from the Korean Statistical Information Service (<http://kosis.kr/>).

In traditional Korean society, elderly people usually lived with their first sons, as Confucianism emphasized the obligation of adult children to live with their elderly parents to support and take care of them. As recently as 1990, more than 70% of elderly people (60 years old and over) in Korea lived with their children or another relative, with only 8% living alone (Korean National Statistical Office, 2005: 200). However, the increasing tendency over the last two decades to adopt the nuclear family as the norm in Korea has significantly altered the living arrangements of elderly people. As we can see in Table 3, the proportion of elderly people living in their child's or another relative's family decreased to 24% in 2005, with 18% of them living alone. The change in the living arrangements of elderly persons indicates a drastic change in family system in South Korea.

In 2006, the percentage of elderly Korean immigrants who lived in the homes of their children or another relative was almost identical (25%) to that of the elderly in Korea. The majority of them lived with their spouses, with another 17% living alone. The 1990 U.S. Census showed that 43% of elderly Korean Americans (including native-born Korean Americans) lived in the homes of their children or another relative (Min 1998b). Given that a small proportion of the sample belonged to native-born Koreans, the percentage of Korean elderly immigrants who

cohabited with their children or another relative is likely to have been higher than 43%. These findings suggest that Korean elderly immigrants went through a radical change in their living arrangements between 1990 and 2006. Two major factors contributed to the change. First, a much higher proportion of elderly Korean immigrants in 2006 had their U.S.-born or U.S-raised (1.5-generation) children than in 1990, whereas the vast majority of Korean elderly immigrants in 1990 had Korean-born or Korean-raised immigrant children. Naturally, it is more likely for elderly Korean immigrants to live with their immigrant children than with their American-born or American-raised children. Second, a cultural trend toward independent living among the elderly population also contributed to the change in the living arrangements of the Korean elderly. Old-timer elderly Korean immigrants, as well as those invited by their immigrant adult children during recent years, try to live independently after a few years of cohabitation with their children. Living separately from their children is now the norm even among the elderly in Korea.

Not surprisingly, a higher proportion (28%) of elderly whites lived alone, with a much smaller proportion (only 6%) of them living with their children's or relatives' families. More Korean elderly immigrants than white elderly people live with their children or other relatives for two practical reasons. First, since most Korean immigrants spend long hours working at their jobs, the arrangement is beneficial because their elderly parents can take care of their children and housework. Many invited their elderly parents or mothers as visitors to help them at home even before they became naturalized citizens. Second, many Korean elderly immigrants invited as permanent residents cannot live separately from their children because of their severe language and cultural barriers and other adjustment difficulties. This is especially true of those settled in smaller Korean communities with no significant elderly Korean networks. A small but

substantially larger proportion of Korean immigrant elderly persons live in group quarters in comparison to their elderly counterparts in Korea.

However, Korean elderly immigrants who live in large Korean communities (such as the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area) can more easily live separately from their children because of the presence of strong Korean-language media, Korean-language centers for the elderly, and more extensive elderly Korean social networks. There are several apartment complexes in the New York-New Jersey area in which many Korean elderly people reside. Also, there are about ten Korean elderly centers in the New York-New Jersey area, with some of them being social service agencies and others being self-help elderly associations. They provide all kinds of services for elderly persons, including free lunches, paperwork, English-language education, and classes for naturalization tests. Along with several Korean churches and business associations, these centers also offer parties and entertainment for elderly Korean Americans at regular intervals. Most of the approximately 560 Korean churches in the New York-New Jersey area also give filial tours to elderly members, usually twice a year.

I included a chapter on “Adjustments among the Elderly” in my book, *Change and Conflicts: Korean Immigrant Families in New York* (Min 1998a). In the chapter, I made a distinction between the immigrated elderly and the invited elderly. The immigrated elderly refers to people who immigrated when they were middle-aged or younger and have recently reached old age, while the invited elderly are recent immigrants who were invited to the U.S. by their children (Min 1998a: 86). The elderly in the Korean community in the U.S. in 1990 consisted largely of the invited elderly who lived with their immigrant children. However, the proportion and number of the immigrated elderly have greatly increased during recent years, as many Korean immigrants have reached old age during recent years. The distinction between the two

groups of the Korean elderly is very important because they have different patterns of adaptations. For example, the invited elderly usually do not have their own independent income source because they have not worked very much in the U.S.

The majority of elderly Koreans who live with their children are invited elderly and thus do not have much income other than their supplementary social security income for naturalized citizens. By contrast, since most of the immigrated Korean elderly have worked here for many years, they receive larger social security checks than the invited elderly in addition to pension and investment money (Min 1998a: 97). Many of them also continue to work in their own businesses after 65, thus they are usually economically independent from their children. However, compared to the invited elderly, who tend to live with their Korean-born children, the immigrated elderly have more difficulty living with their 1.5- and/or second-generation adult children who have been educated here and are thus very much acculturated to American society. Consequently, few of the immigrated elderly live with their own children. While they are more satisfied with their economic conditions and economic independence from their children than the invited elderly, they seem to be less satisfied with the relationships with their children than the invited elderly (Min 1998a: 99). First of all, the majority of second-generation Koreans are married to non-Korean partners, which makes it difficult for their parents to interact with their in-laws. Many immigrated Korean elderly persons feel lucky when their children marry Korean partners.

Younger-Generation Koreans' Adaptations in Family Systems

It has been about forty years since the mass immigration of Koreans started. Many native-born second- and 1.5-generation Koreans have grown up and established their own families.

According to the 2008 American Community Survey, 27% (N=75,300) of approximately 279,000 1.5-generation (those who immigrated to the U.S. at 12 or before) Koreans and 16% (N=58,000) of approximately 362,000 native-born Koreans were married. However, despite a rapid increase in younger-generation families, there is no major study of second-generation Korean families, to our knowledge. Since no major study of younger-generation Korean families has been conducted, I will depend mainly upon census data in discussing intergenerational changes in Korean American families.

As noted above, Korean immigrants have gone through some changes in their family system in proportion to the length of their residence in the United States. However, we expect to see more significant changes over generations. Native-born second- and higher-generation Koreans, in addition to Koreans who came to the United States at early ages (the 1.5 generation) accompanied by their parents, are far more acculturated to American society than first-generation Korean immigrants. Moreover, while first-generation Korean immigrants are economically segregated in the ethnic economy as business owners or employees of co-ethnic businesses, younger-generation Koreans are predominantly in the mainstream economy (Min 2006). Thus these younger-generation Koreans are likely to have lost many of the Confucian elements of the Korean family system that emphasize kin ties, the importance of children's education, and subordination of wives to husbands.

Table 4 shows the generational differences in family system among Korean Americans based on the 2006-2008 American Community Surveys. As expected, Korean immigrants have substantially larger households than native-born Koreans. But contrary to our expectations, there is not much difference in the household size between the immigrant and the 1.5 generations. Consistently, there is a positive relationship between generation and percentage of single-person

households. The proportion of single-person households for 1.5-generation Koreans (29%) is almost identical with that of non-Hispanic whites (28%), yet it is smaller than that of second-generation Koreans (36%), but larger than that of Korean immigrants (only 22%). In addition, native-born Koreans have smaller household sizes than first- and 1.5-generation, but not necessarily because they have fewer children. These findings suggest that native-born Koreans' smaller household size is due mainly to their much higher proportion of single-person households (36%) and partly to their having fewer children.

We noted in the previous section that Korean immigrant families have an average of 0.2 non-nuclear family members per family, twice as many as native-born white families (0.1). Surprisingly, 1.5- and second-generation Korean families have twice as many non-nuclear family members (0.4) as Korean immigrant families. This surprising finding can be explained by two major factors: (1) two types of younger-generation Korean families having much smaller proportions of married-couple families (see the next paragraph) symbolizing nuclear families,¹ and (2) the possibility of many 1.5- and second-generation Korean unmarried young adults reporting themselves as heads of households, instead of their parents, to the Census Bureau.² When we compare the three generations, focusing only on married-couple families, first-generation Korean immigrant families are likely to have on average a larger number of non-nuclear family members than either of the younger-generation families.

¹Since 1.5- and native-born Korean families have much smaller proportions of married-couple families than Korean immigrant families, other types of non-nuclear families (consisting of two or more siblings or combining parents and unmarried adult child) are likely to comprise larger proportions of two types of younger-generation families.

² When unmarried younger-generation Koreans live with their parents, in most cases their parents are likely to be heads of household. But because of their fluency in English many younger-generation young adults may report themselves as heads of households to the Census Bureau.

Table 4: Family Characteristics of Korean Americans by Generation, 2006-2008

Characteristics	First Generation Korean	1.5 Generation Korean	Native-Born Korean
Average number of persons per household	2.7	2.6	2.3
Average number of persons per family	3.2	3.3	3.1
Percent of single-person households	22.3	28.5	35.9
Average number of children per family	1.2	1.2	.9
Average number of nonnuclear family members per family	.2	.4	.4
Percent of married-couple families	82.1	75.6	74.2
Percent of female-headed families	12.7	12.9	15.5
Percent of having own children in married-couple Families	67.0	72.0	59.4
Percent of divorced persons among persons 15 years and over	5.7	6.2	9.9
Percent of labor force participation among women, 16 years old and over	47.0	68.0	59.1
Percent of labor force participation among married women, 16 years old and over	47.8	69.9	67.0

Source: 2006-2008 American Community Surveys from IPUMS (Ruggles et al. 2008c).

Note: Korean American households are defined by race and nativity of the householder, excluding multi-racial cases. 1.5 generation Korean American refer to those immigrated to the United States before 13 years of age.

Statistics in the middle columns in Table 4 are indicators of family instability. Native-born Korean families have a larger proportion of female-headed families than first- or 1.5-generation families. Consistently, when the number of divorcees per 1,000 people is used as an indicator of divorce rate, there seems to be a substantial increase in divorce rate over generations. But since there are radical differences in marriage rate among the three generations, we cannot use the same indicator of divorce to see the generational differences in divorce rate. While about 70% of first-generation Korean immigrants 16 years old and over are married, only 28% of 1.5-generation Koreans and 17% of native-born Koreans are married. When such radical differences in marriage rate exist among the given generations, the ratio of married persons to divorced persons is likely a more accurate indicator of divorce. When the ratios are assessed, we find that 1 of every 9.0 Korean immigrants is divorced. The ratios for the 1.5- and native-born generations

are respectively 7.9 to 1 and 8.6 to 1. These figures suggest that the 1.5-generation has the highest divorce rate while the first generation has the lowest divorce rate.

As noted in the previous section, first-generation Korean women have a much higher divorce rate than their male counterparts mainly because Korean women married to U.S. servicemen have a greater tendency for divorce. When the unique effect of the intermarriage between Korean immigrants and U.S. servicemen on the divorce rate of Korean immigrants is eliminated, the difference between first-generation Korean immigrants and younger-generation Koreans in divorce rate is actually greater than the above ratios may indicate. The higher divorce rate of younger-generation Koreans than first-generation Koreans seems to be due partly to their higher level of acculturation and partly to their higher intermarriage rate.

The final two rows in Table 4 have indicators of women's labor force participation rate. Naturally, regardless of their marital status, younger-generation women participate in the labor force more actively than Korean immigrant women. Particularly among married women, there is a significant linear increase in the labor force participation rate over generations. While only about half of Korean immigrant married women 16-64 years old work outside of the home, 71% of their 1.5-generation and 74% of their second-generation counterparts participate in economic activities. Younger-generation Korean women have much higher educational levels than Korean immigrant women.³ Also, they are fluent in English and familiar with the American job market. Given these advantages for their employment in the general labor market, it is quite natural that three-fourths of married native-born Korean women at working ages participate in the labor force.

³ According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 61% of native-born Korean women 25-64 years old completed four years of college education, compared to 39% of Korean immigrant women. In fact, native-born Korean women have a higher college graduation rate than their male counterparts. See Min (2006), p.91.

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