[2]

Korean Migration to America: Dependent Development and "American Fever"

Korean immigration to America can be interpreted as one outcome of American political, economic, missionary, and military involvement in Korea since the late nineteenth century. Taking this viewpoint, Illsoo Kim (1981) has focused on such immigration as an interplay between the political and economic problems, social structure, and foreign policy of Korea on the one hand and the international trade, economic structure, and immigration policies of the United States on the other. More bluntly, Light and Bonacich (1988) attribute Korea's rising number of emigrants to its role as supplier of cheap labor in the world economic system.

The historical phases of Korean immigration to the United States are summarized in table 1. Korean immigration before 1965 resulted from the need for cheap labor in Hawaii and U.S. political and military involvement in the Korean peninsula. Since 1965, five main factors have influenced Korean emigration to the United States: Korea's partition; the continuing involvement of the U.S. government in the Korean peninsula in political, military, and economic issues; the rise of the new middle class in Korea; the development of a new international division of labor and the changing status of Korea in this new situation; and the migration policies created by both the U.S. and Korean governments.

Immigration to the United States before 1965

By 1888, a small number of Korean students, political exiles, *insam* (ginseng) merchants, and migrant laborers began to arrive on American shores (Hurh and Kim 1980: 25); but the total number of Koreans in the

Table 1. Korean immigration to the United States, 1903–1994

Year admitted	Number of immigrants	Category
1903–5	7,226	Labor migration to Hawaii
1910–24	1,100	Picture brides
1951–64	14,027	Post–Korean War immigration
1965	2,139	Early wave of new immigrants
1966	2,492	
1967	3,956	
1968	3,811	
1969	6,045	
1970	9,314	
1971	14,297	
1972	18,876	
1973	22,930	
1974	28,028	
1975	28,362	
1976	30,803	Later wave of new immigrants
1977	30,917	
1978	29,288	
1979	29,248	
1980	32,320	
1981	32,633	
1982	31,724	
1983	33,339	
1984	33,042	
1985	35,000	
1986	35,776	
1987	35,849	
1988	34,703	
1989	34,222	
1990	32,301	
1991	26,518	
1992	19,359	
1993	18,026	
1994	10,799	

Note: No data are shown for 1906–9 and 1925–50 because no official immigration occurred in those years.

Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Annual Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995).

United States before the twentieth century was estimated at fewer than fifty. The first major wave of immigrants reached Hawaii during 1903–5. This phase of immigration brought a total of 7,226 Koreans as contract laborers for sugar plantations (W. Kim 1971: 1–4; Choy 1979: 69–72; Patterson 1988). Most were brought as strike breakers to replace Japanese workers, who demanded wage increases after they had served their time as contract laborers and initiated strikes in the sugarcane fields.

About two thousand of these Korean laborers later came to the U.S. mainland, although most remained on the West Coast. The class origin of these early immigrants is unclear, but most seem to have been peasants or urban workers. The majority were young bachelors between the ages of twenty and thirty. Coming from port cities throughout Korea, they were largely uneducated and engaged in semiskilled or unskilled occupations; some also had contact with Christian missionaries (Hurh and Kim 1980: 31).

In 1905 the Korean government, at that time a de facto Japanese protectorate, suddenly forbade further emigration. The Japanese government wanted to stop "anti-Japanese colonial resistance" activities among the overseas Koreans and protect Japanese immigrants in the Hawaiian islands from Korean competition. But after the conclusion of the Gentlemen's Agreement between the United States and Japan in 1908, Koreans in Hawaii were granted permission to bring their wives and families. Subsequently, more than eight hundred "picture brides" came to join their husbands between 1910 and 1924 (see Chai 1981).

Following passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, only a few Koreans entered the United States until the end of the 1950–53 Korean War. Between the war and 1965, a new cohort of Koreans arrived as war orphans or wives and relatives of American servicemen who had been stationed in Korea. By 1980 approximately fifty thousand Korean women who had married Americans were living in the United States (Barringer and Cho 1989). Although it is not clear how many Koreans came to New York City in this period, those who did were the first to settle in Queens, one of the five boroughs of New York City. Bok-Lim Kim summarizes the demographic profile of the typical Korean war bride in America: "A relatively young to early-middle-aged woman, with a median education level of eighth grade. Her husband has an even chance of being either a few years older, or much older or younger than she. He is likely to be employed in military service or engaged in skilled or semiskilled work. The couple has two or fewer children and have practically no organizational

affiliations, with extremely limited participation in social activities" (1977: 103).

Korea's Dependent Development and Class Process

Korea's partition into north and south, *pundan*, was an outcome of the Korean War, and continuing fears about the possibility of another war have influenced Koreans' decisions about migration. Since the 1950s, the United States has accelerated its political, military, and economic presence in Korea. (Hereafter "Korea" indicates South Korea.) From an agrarian society, Korea has been transformed into an industrial country (see Kibaik Lee 1961 and Eckert et al. 1990). One of the poorest countries in the world in 1950, it achieved the status of an "upper-middle income level" country by the late 1980s. As a result of this rapid economic development, new middle and working classes have emerged.

Since the end of World War II, a major objective of U.S. foreign policy has been to keep friendly Third World nations within its sphere of influence. As the cold war intensified, the Korean peninsula became the focus of East-West political and military rivalry that culminated in the Korean War. Korea then became an American client state: The United States has not only given massive economic and military aid but also intervened in Korea's domestic political affairs. Indeed, U.S. economic and military aid to Korea amounted to $12.5 billion between 1946 and 1976 (Mason et al. 1980: 182). Since the mid-sixties, a reduction in U.S. aid has been compensated for by a large increase in foreign investment.

Few Third World countries can match Korea in terms of the central role that the state plays in promoting development. According to Lim (1982: 28), the state has played an unusually strong role in mobilizing resources and manpower and managing social and political tensions. Continuous threats from the Communists in the north have imposed a heavy defense burden, thereby limiting the allocation of available resources for the promotion of industrialization. These threats have also been used as an excuse for the suspension of democracy in the name of security, stability, and growth.

Korea's experience has been labeled "dependent development" (see Amsden 1989; Deyo 1987; Evans 1979): dependent because it is indelibly characterized by continued dependence on foreign capital, technology, and trade; development because of the capital accumulation and differentiation in its productive structure (Lim 1982: 4). Korea's dependent development started with Japanese colonial rule (1910 to 1945). It was developed economically as a complement to the Japanese empire and thus became dependent as an export market with a single product, rice. An industrial bourgeoisie took form after independence from Japan. Even more than postliberation social reforms, the Korean War contributed to the dissolution of agrarian classes and status hierarchies. By the late 1950s, a group of entrepreneurs who had successfully exploited their political connections had become the big bourgeoisie, *chaebŏl*. According to Jones and Sakong (1980: 166–209), these modern entrepreneurs came from various class backgrounds: large to medium landowners (47 percent), merchants (19 percent), factory owners (16 percent), civil servants (6 percent), teachers (4 percent), and professionals (7 percent).

Table 2. Changes in class structure in Korea, 1960–1975

Classes	1960	1966	1970	1975
Upper class[a]	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.8
New middle class[b]	8.6	8.6	9.5	10.5
Old middle class[c]	5.6	10.3	6.3	6.8
Working class[d]	8.7	12.4	19.2	21.1
Marginal sector[e]	10.2	11.0	12.8	11.5
Farmers[f]	66.2	56.8	51.2	59.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

[a]Capitalist class and state managers.
[b]White-collar workers and rank-and-file civil servants.
[c]Small-scale unorganized urban shopkeepers.
[d]Blue-collar workers.
[e]Propertyless laborers in urban areas.
[f]Independent farmers, landless tenant farmers, and farm laborers.
Source: Hagen Koo, "A Preliminary Approach to Contemporary Korean Class Structure," in *Society in Transition*, ed. Yunshik Chang (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1982), p. 53. Reproduced by courtesy of the author.

The most conspicuous change in the Korean class structure during dependent development was the rapid growth of the working class (see table 2). While limiting the economic penetration of multinationals, the state and the big bourgeoisie took for themselves a large share of the fruits of growth, to the relative exclusion of workers. The working class was disappointed by increasing income differentials, and labor disputes occurred almost daily during the late 1980s (see S. K. Kim 1990). In addition, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw burgeoning white-collar labor

unions, such as those composed of teachers and bank employees, which represented a polarization in the middle classes and a proletarianization of the lower echelons of white-collar labor.

Immigration to the United States: 1965 to Today

The process of Korea's development provides a context for understanding the background of recent Korean immigrants, who were largely middle-class professionals in their homeland. Korea's rapid development led to the rise of both a new middle class and a new working class. The new middle class is a contradictory one characterized by conservative sectors aspiring to move upward within the status quo and liberal or radical sectors—primarily the intelligentsia—who side with labor and work to promote a more democratic, egalitarian society (see Koo 1987).

The most important reason cited for emigration of middle-class Koreans has been an economic one (I. Kim 1981; Light and Bonacich 1988). They heard about only the good sides of American economic life. The dollar was very strong against the Korean *wŏn*, and the annual income of Americans was at least ten times that of Koreans until the early 1980s. (As of 1993, average income in the United States is only about three times larger than Korea's). Economic factors, however, were not the only reasons for emigration. The strong economic, political, and cultural influence of the United States—what I call American fever—has influenced Koreans since the nation came under U.S. military rule after the defeat of Japan in 1945.

Because of oppressive regimes in Korea during the 1970s and the early 1980s and severe tension between North and South Korea during the late 1970s, many Koreans who feared political instability sought to go to the United States (I. Kim 1981; J. Yi 1993). For North Korean Christians who fled from Communist North Korea during the Korean War, America seemed an especially safe and attractive place. It was easy for them to leave South Korea because they did not have strong kinship ties and feared being the first victims in the event that North Korea invaded South Korea. The authoritarian regime in South Korea also caused some intellectuals to emigrate.

According to their time of arrival in the United States, the new Korean immigrants can be classified into two cohorts: One group arrived after the 1965 Immigration Act, the other after the 1976 amendment. These groups

differ in both background characteristics and the circumstances under which they came.

The Immigration Act of 3 October 1965 (PL 89–236) set an annual limit of 170,000 immigrants from the eastern hemisphere, with a maximum of 20,000 for any individual country, exclusive of immediate relatives of American citizens. The 1965 law, which took effect in 1968, ended the national origins quota system in favor of a system of graded preferences, including preferences for family members of persons already in the United States and workers with needed skills. Although work skills were emphasized, there was a major shift in policy to family reunification. The first, second, fourth, and fifth preferences allotted up to 74 percent of a country's quota to close family members of U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens (Bouvier and Gardner 1986: 14). Also admitted beyond the numerical quotas were spouses, parents, and unmarried children under age eighteen of U.S. citizens and designated refugees (Gardner, Robey, and Smith 1985: 9).

Labor qualifications were the criterion only for the third preference (members of the professions, scientists, and nonperforming artists of exceptional ability) and the sixth preference (skilled and unskilled workers "in occupations for which labor is in short supply"), with 10 percent apiece. No worker under these preferences could enter the United States unless the secretary of labor certified that the alien would have no adverse effect on wages and working conditions: "[The policy] places the burden of proving no adverse effect upon the applying alien" (Keely 1980: 16). With this new legislation, the Asian share of total immigration to the United States increased from 7.6 percent (1961–65) to 27.4 percent (1969–73), exceeding the European share for the first time in American immigration history. In the 1970s, Asian immigration rose to 34 percent. Between 1980 and 1988, Asians made up 40 to 47 percent of all U.S. immigrants (Min 1995: 12).

The 1960s and 1970s were a period in Korea of rapid urbanization and industrial development, leading to the rise of a new middle class of professionals, managers, and entrepreneurs. In 1988, professionals and white-collar employees of large business and government bureaucracies formed about 20 percent of the total labor force, compared with only 7 percent in the 1960s (EPB 1989). Koreans themselves are very conscious of the rapid growth of the middle class—what the mass media has called *chungsanch'ŭng* (literally, a "middle propertied stratum"). This sector symbolizes economic prosperity and changing cultural values in contemporary

Korean society. The critical role of this middle class in the 1987 democratization movement is widely recognized.

Many in this new stratum eventually emigrated to America, causing a brain drain of educated professionals. Portes considers this drain to be part of world system theory: "Professional emigration is basically a consequence of the reproduction of the technical apparatus of advanced nations in underdeveloped ones. Implanted [educational] institutions come to function more in accordance with needs requirements of the advanced societies than those of the country that receives them" (Portes and Walton 1981: 37). According to Ong, Bonacich, and Cheng (1994), new Asian immigrants have been profoundly influenced by the restructuring of the global economy, particularly in Pacific Rim industries. Asian countries are producing more highly trained professionals, managers, and entrepreneurs than they can absorb. This imbalance "is a product of the contradictions of capitalism, the resulting class struggle, and the efforts to restructure the global economy" (1994: 26–27).

Although Light and Bonacich (1988) argue that social and economic dislocation induced the Korean middle class to emigrate, I contend that developments in the world system, particularly the American labor market, prompted emigration. On the one hand, U.S. government policies allowed the Korean middle class, not the poor, to emigrate; on the other hand, the Korean government was not able to absorb its mass-produced professional managerial class.

Many emigrants left Korea in pursuit of mobility and modernity and felt that these aspirations could be better achieved in the American labor market. Some middle-class people were frustrated with the rigid Korean social structure. For instance, if a person leaves a job as a high-level executive, he or she will have difficulty finding a similar post in Korea. Many doctors aspired to go to America after working with high-level technology imported from the United States. Other professionals found it difficult to obtain jobs in the Korean labor market due to its skewed development. For example, some doctors did not want to serve at public health centers in the countryside, preferring private practice in Seoul. The situation confronting nurses was worse: They were mass-trained under government policy with the expectation that they could go to nations such as West Germany. In Korea nurses were not paid well, and many began to consider emigration to the United States as prospects for working in West Germany declined.

In the late 1960s emigration to the United States began in earnest (see

table 1).[1] By 1973 some 20,000 Koreans annually obtained immigration clearance under occupational and family reunification preferences. The Korean share of total U.S. immigration quickly mounted. In 1965 the top three countries sending immigrants the United States were the United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy. In 1975, they were the Philippines, Korea, and China (Hurh and Kim 1980: 49). From 1965 to 1985, Koreans immigrating to America on the basis of their labor skills and under family reunification numbered 463,481. The earlier wave of immigrants, those arriving up to 1976, consisted mostly of medical professionals—doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, medical technicians—and scientists, engineers, and other skilled professionals. It is estimated that at least 13,000 Korean medical professionals immigrated to the United States by 1977 (I. Kim 1981: 148).

An important category was nurses. Korean exchange nurses in the United States during the late 1960s formed the second-largest nationality group in the profession (Ishi 1988: 36). By 1974, one-third of Korean immigrant professionals admitted to the United States were nurses. They made a major contribution to the establishment of the Korean community in New York City, first by working in their profession and later by starting small businesses with their husbands. Many husbands, in fact, were sponsored for immigration visas by their nurse wives.

Other Koreans came here as remigrants after working as miners, construction and transportation workers, sailors, and nurses in West Germany, Vietnam, and the Middle East. Still more remigrated to America after first settling in South American countries, Canada, or Japan. There were also many students who became immigrants.

The second wave of new Korean immigrants came after President Gerald Ford signed the Immigration and Nationality Act amendments of 1976, which limited the entry of professionals. One amendment downgraded professionals such as nurses, physicians, and dentists from third to sixth preference. This meant that before entry they, too, would have to

1. In 1962 the South Korean government passed an overseas emigration law to encourage emigration as a means of controlling population, alleviating unemployment, earning foreign exchange, and acquiring knowledge of advanced technology (I. Kim 1981: 52–53; Light and Bonacich 1988: 103). The first seven families, encompassing ninety-two individuals, emigrated to Brazil, while others went to Paraguay and Argentina. The total number of South American emigrants amounted to 40,000 as of 1990. For further information on the Korean government's overseas contract program to West Germany, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Uganda, and the Middle East, see I. Kim 1981: 53–57.

find an American employer willing to hire them (I. Kim 1981: 30). Although Asians made up a large percentage of the health professionals admitted before 1977, this amendment limited their chances of getting an immigrant visa on the basis of their skills. Therefore, an increasing number of Asian doctors, nurses, and pharmacists now attempted to enter under family reunification criteria instead. As a consequence, the proportion of Koreans admitted under the employment-related third and sixth preferences dropped. The percentage of entries under the occupational preferences reached a peak of 45.1 percent in 1972; it then began to fall, reaching 22 percent in 1975 (I. Kim 1981: 31). Since 1980, that share has been just 3.9 percent for all immigrants (Bouvier and Gardner 1986: 17).

This shift, however, does not mean that fewer Korean professionals are entering the United States. While the proportion who enter through the occupational categories has decreased during the last fifteen years, the absolute number of professionals has not. In 1969, 1,164 immigrants indicated that they were professionals or managers before entry. This figure rose to 3,955 in 1972, 2,782 in 1985, and 3,109 in 1989 (quoted in Hing 1993: 99). In short, as a result of the 1976 legislation, the principal channel by which Koreans could enter America was family reunification.[2] While the pre-1976 wave of immigrants included mainly middle-class professionals, the later wave included Koreans from a variety of class backgrounds and educational and skill levels.

Another change occurred in 1978 when the Korean government lifted the limit of $1,000 that emigrants could convert to dollars and bring with them. In 1979, the limit was raised to $3,000 for each emigrant to the United States. Later in the 1980s, the government became more flexible and allowed each family to take up to $100,000, and in 1990 the figure was raised to $200,000 (Paek Su Yong of the Bank of Korea, personal communication, July 1990). These capital flows should be understood in relation to the changing position of Korea in the world economic system, including closer trading ties with the United States. Some immigrants took advantage of this relationship by directly involving themselves in trade or distributing and retailing Korean goods in the United States. (See I. Kim 1981 for a detailed discussion of the impact of the trade in women's wigs exported from Korea on Korean immigrants in New York City.)

2. Another major revision of the 1965 immigration law took place in 1986. The Immigration Reform and Control Act imposed civil and criminal penalties on employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens, granted temporary resident status to aliens who had resided in the United States before 1 January 1982, and promised permanent resident status to those same aliens after eighteen months. Because there are fewer undocumented Asian immigrants than Mexicans in the United States, the 1986 law has affected Asians less than it has Mexicans (Chan 1991: 148).

Some post-1978 immigrants are from the richer classes, but others are now also from lower income groups. These latter immigrants have kin or family in the United States who invite them to America through family reunification preferences. Still others attempt to enter illegally, sometimes across the Mexican border or through other Latin American countries. This newest wave of immigrants has increased stratification by wealth and education in the New York Korean American community.

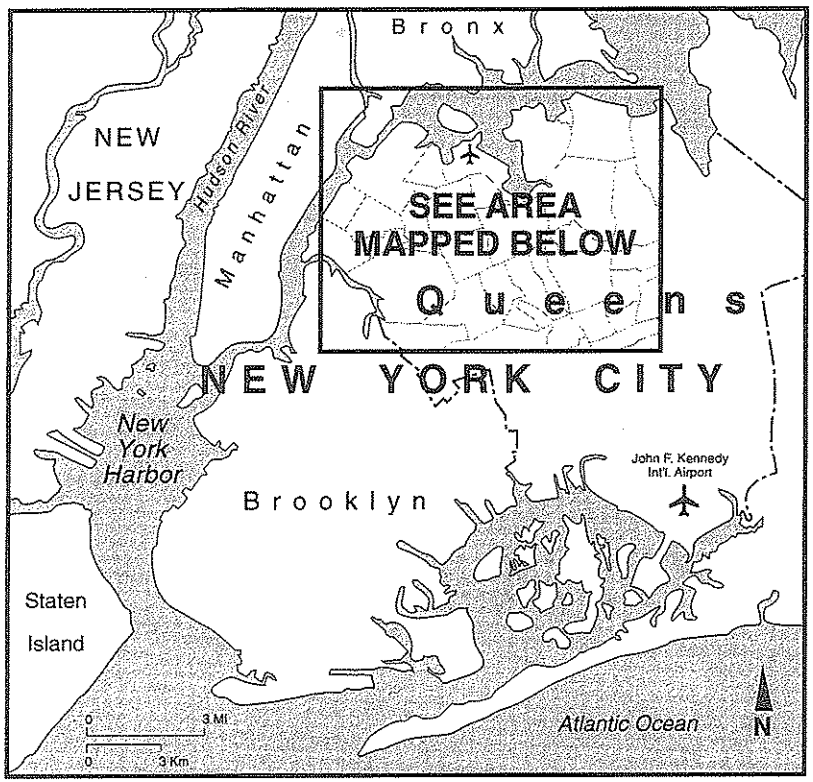
The Korean Community in America

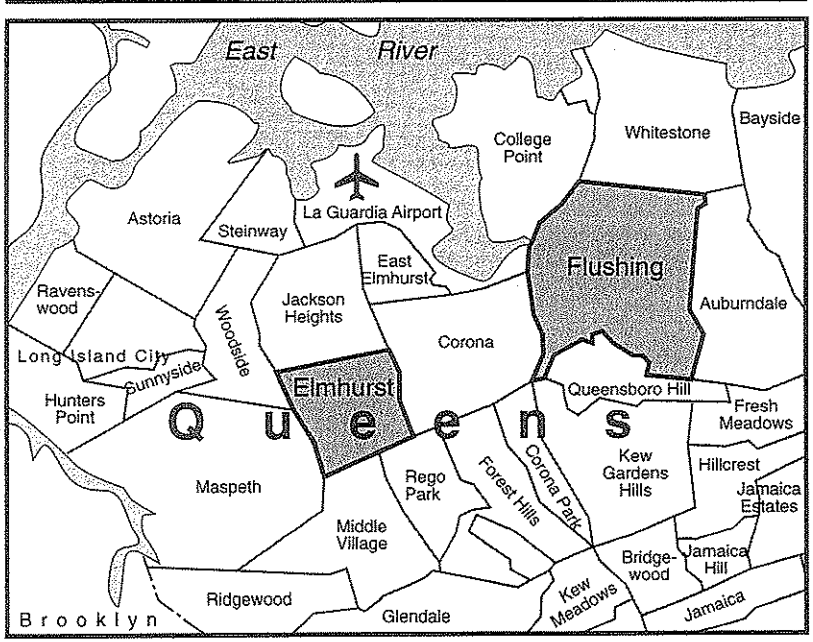
The United States census counted Koreans as a distinct ethnic group for the first time in 1970. Earlier, Koreans were included in the "other Asian" category. According to the 1970 count, there were 70,598 Koreans in the United States. In 1980, 357,393 were counted, making up 10.3 percent of all Asian Americans (Gardner, Robey, and Smith 1985: 5). The 1990 census counted 798,849 Koreans.

Some 43 percent of Koreans live on the West Coast (Gardner, Robey, and Smith 1985: 11). The Korean communities in Los Angeles and New York are, respectively, the first- and second-largest aggregations of Koreans in America. The 1980 census showed that there were 103,000 in California and 33,000 in New York; 1990 census data counted 259,941 in California and 95,648 in New York, but this undoubtedly is an undercount. Several factors make it difficult for Koreans to be accounted for fully in the census. In addition to their language and cultural barriers, Koreans work from early in the morning till late at night and are thus away from residential areas when census takers visit. According to estimates from community leaders, in 1989 there were some 200,000 Koreans in greater New York and 300,000 in greater Los Angeles (*Korea Times*, 31 December 1989).

Koreans in Queens

Even if the 1980 census underestimated the total number, it did show that in New York City more than 62 percent of Koreans live in the borough of Queens. We find them in several neighborhoods (see figure 1).





Many live along the number 7 subway route, extending from Sunnyside and Woodside through Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and Corona to Flushing. Forest Hills, Bayside, and Little Neck contain other concentrations. The largest concentration is said to be in Flushing, the second largest in Elmhurst (see plate 1). According to a 1983 Chemical Bank report, there were 40,000 Koreans in Flushing, and they formed the largest Asian group.[3] By 1989 the Korean American Association of Flushing claimed 65,000 Koreans. Korean language newspapers frequently report that there are at least 115,000 Koreans in Queens. But nobody knows the exact number; and like all ethnic estimates, they seem to be inflated for political reasons. Estimates in Queens, in particular, seem to grow in competition with those for the Chinese community (*Korea Times*, 31 December 1989).

Even before the 1960s, some Korean students had settled in Sunnyside, enjoying the efficient public transportation system to Manhattan. Several pioneer Korean Flushing residents were businessmen who participated in the 1964 World's Fair in Flushing Meadow-Corona Park and then decided to stay in America. In Elmhurst, two large apartment buildings in front of Elmhurst City Hospital were initially occupied by a few Korean nurses and their families in 1971.[4] Today they house three hundred Korean households that have moved into Elmhurst since that time.

During the 1980s, Broadway, a major Elmhurst commercial strip, was revitalized by immigrant businesses, many of them Korean-owned. According to the Korean American Association of Mid-Queens, which represents many of these businesses, in 1985 there were 250 Korean-owned stores and professional businesses in Elmhurst and nearby Jackson Heights, Woodside, and Sunnyside. According to a 1986 survey, out of 912 Elmhurst businesses, Koreans ran 105, the largest number of businesses

3. Flushing (Community District 7), originally part of the Colony of New Netherlands, was founded in 1645 with the granting of lands to English colonists from Massachusetts (Kupka 1949). The first occupation of the settlers was farming, followed by the establishment of nurseries in 1737. In 1898 Flushing became part of New York City, and the IRT subway line opened in 1928.

4. In 1652, farmers from England first settled in the center of what is today Elmhurst and named it Newtown; the name Elmhurst was bestowed by a real estate agent in 1890 (Tauber and Kaplan 1966). Like Flushing, Elmhurst became part of New York City in 1898. Many ethnic groups have resided in Elmhurst. German, Irish, and Swedish immigrants were the first wave of nineteenth-century residents here. In 1970 the community had 23 percent Latin American residents, 70 percent whites, 3 percent blacks, and 4 percent others (including Asians). In 1980, 15 percent of Community District 4's population was Asian, and 83 percent of them lived in Elmhurst.

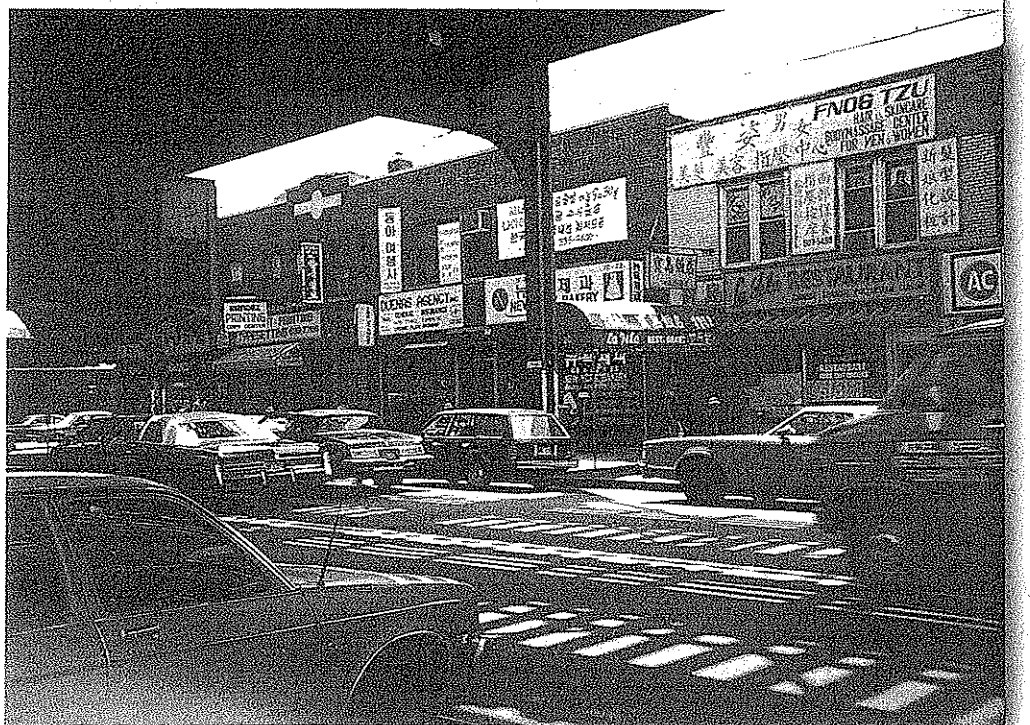


Plate 1. A view from 74th Street in Elmhurst of the various ethnic businesses. Photo author

for any of Elmhurst's forty nationalities, with the exception of "Americans," who operated two hundred (Yuan 1986). Since that time, the number and variety of Korean small businesses in Elmhurst have increased.[5] By 1989, stores included supermarkets, groceries (carrying either Western or Asian foods), fruit and vegetable stands, fish stores, delicatessens, bakeries, restaurants, stationeries, gift shops, candy stores, general merchandise stores, fashion stores, jewelry stores, video rental stores, shoe stores, dry cleaners, shoe repair shops, beauty salons, real estate offices, driving schools, language schools, insurance agencies, travel agencies, a chess parlor, moving agencies, car repair shops, sign companies, construction

5. The distribution pattern of businesses differs in communities where Koreans do business with other Koreans and communities where there are non-Korean customers. For example, vegetable stands and fish stores often proliferate in neighborhoods with mostly non-Korean customers.

firms, security companies, refrigeration companies, craft stores, doctors' offices, dentists, accountants, lawyers, a Korean-owned medical center, pharmacies, Korean herb doctors and acupuncturists, a fortune teller, garment factories, a bowling alley, massage parlors, and bars.

Even while I was doing my fieldwork in Elmhurst, I noticed more Korean businesses opening. I also observed many non-Korean businesses, including real estate agencies, beauty salons, and law firms, hiring Korean employees. At the same time, Korean stores were hiring Latin American, Chinese, and white American employees. In general, most business owners in Elmhurst tried to hire a range of bilingual staff members to cater to the multiethnic local population.

The greater Elmhurst area has also seen the development of Korean social and political organizations, such as the Korean American Association of Mid-Queens, the Elmhurst Korean Senior Center (*Sarangbang*), the Korean-American Senior Center (in Woodside), the Young Korean American Service and Education Center (in Jackson Heights), Young Koreans United of New York (in Jackson Heights), Korean Americans for Peace and Justice (in Corona), Asian American Mental Health Services Korean Unit, the Korean Blind Foundation in the United States of America, Professional United States of America Photographer Club, forty-four Korean churches (fourteen in Elmhurst, six in Jackson Heights, twenty-four in Woodside) (see chapter 9), and a Buddhist temple. In 1986 and 1987, two Korean women and one man were appointed to Community Board 4 (Elmhurst-Corona) to advise on land use issues, oversee municipal services, and make formal budget recommendations.

Most Korean residents of Elmhurst live in rented one-bedroom apartments and single-family houses in nuclear families with fairly young husbands and wives, many with children, a few without. This picture is also true of the Korean community in Flushing. In Sunnyside, however, according to a minister whose church is located there, many Koreans are single men or women who are attracted by the neighborhood's fairly small apartment complexes.

In the first phase of my fieldwork I interviewed eighteen Korean immigrants, focusing on their life stories. I then conducted systematic household and thematic interviews with ninety-one immigrants. My research methodology was different from traditional anthropological studies in that I did not focus on a bounded locality. The 109 interviews do not constitute a random sample, nor can they be considered representative in a statistical sense. Rather, they are an attempt to examine the diversity of experiences

within the Korean immigrant community. I also conducted interviews with sixteen activists and leaders in community organizations. Equally important, I observed more than fifty events, such as monthly meetings of the Korean American Association of Flushing, the Korean Parade, the Korean Mid-Autumn Festival, the Queens Festival, and other events in which Koreans from Queens participate.

The statistical presentations that follow concern the 91 households I interviewed, plus data from my 18 other interviews. (For this reason, some tables include a total of more than 91 cases.) In recent writings on migration, several researchers have recommended the use of the household as a basic unit of analysis because it contributes to and mediates both macro- and microlevel processes (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991: 133). Out of the 91 households, 83 are composed of first-generation adults. All my informants either live, work, or attend church in Queens.[6] Among 109 households, 69 were located in Elmhurst, 13 in Jackson Heights, 17 in the rest of Queens, 3 elsewhere in New York City, and 7 in New Jersey. The workplaces of my informants (one from each household) were mainly in Queens: 55 in Elmhurst, 9 in Jackson Heights, and 10 elsewhere. Of the remaining 23, 11 were in Manhattan and 12 on Long Island or in New Jersey.

The Migration Process

Although Koreans who have arrived since 1965 are often called new immigrants, I refer to those who arrived between 1965 and 1976 as "the early wave." While the early wave came mostly through occupational preference, those after 1976 came mainly by family reunification. Overall, only 20 percent of my informants came to the United States through occupational preference. Among these, the majority were medical professionals. Another 54 percent migrated through family reunification, either invited by immediate family members (parents and children) with green cards or by a brother or a sister who was an American citizen. Some 4 percent came as students and later decided to stay permanently. A larger group, about 15 percent, came with tourist, visitor, business, or nonimmigrant employment visas. According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, in 1981–82 close to 100,000 Koreans came to the United

6. For my interviewees, the definition of community goes beyond the boundary of a geographical locality. For instance, residents of Elmhurst also considered Flushing and nearby neighborhoods as part of their community.

States on nonimmigrant visas, including 8,000 students; we do not know how many of these 100,000 eventually remained in America (*Korea Times*, 6 September 1985). Finally, 7 percent of my informants entered the United States illegally.

Among my 91 informants, 18 came here by occupational preference, including 4 medical doctors, 1 nurse, 2 medical technicians, 4 pharmacists, 1 beautician, 2 automobile mechanics, 1 welder, and 1 cook. As I. Kim (1981) and Light and Bonanich (1988) have pointed out, most people emigrating under this preference were from Korea's highly educated middle or upper class; but as one can gather, not all of my informants fit this profile. Some went through special training in automobile and television repair, metalworking, computer programming, or hairdressing expressly for the sake of immigration. Most of the medical professionals applied for immigration visas directly, but the automobile mechanics and other skilled workers paid fees to Korean agencies (see I. Kim 1981: 60–64), which obtained work permits for them. A common early-wave pattern was for men to come first and, after establishing themselves in America, bring their families. Many female nurses, however, came by themselves and met husbands here. Some men came legally on business visas but overstayed their visas and remained illegally.

Among my informants who came to the United States by occupational preference, two automobile mechanics are now retired. The cook and his wife, a waitress, have worked for the same employer since they emigrated from Korea twenty years ago. The nurse is now a real estate saleswoman, and the pharmacists now run their own drugstores. All four medical doctors have remained in their profession; they now live on Long Island, although some continue to keep offices for Korean patients in Elmhurst or Flushing.

Among the early-wave immigrants, I met several men who came as students and decided to stay. One of my informants quit his studies, married a nurse, and went into business with her. He now runs a successful Korean supermarket. Three men came to work in a branch office of a Korean company. After living for a few years in America, they decided to stay and applied for immigrant visas under the sponsorship of their company. One now runs a Korean restaurant, which he began as a coffee shop.

Mr. Kim, an early-wave immigrant and a pharmacist, came to America in 1973. In Korea he had worked for a pharmaceutical company for a year; and since 1987, he has run his own drugstore. His story reveals that he

prepared to obtain training in skilled work, knowing that it would take time for a Korea-trained pharmacist to practice in the United States.

> In Korea I had been informed that in America it is hard to get a job as a pharmacist immediately, so I studied camera repair for a few months. I was supposed to repair five cameras a day. In six months I took stock of what I had done in my life. After another six months, I started to work as an intern at a hospital in the Bronx. While in Korea it takes four years to finish pharmacology, it takes five years in America. Therefore, I was supposed to add 1,000 hours more, which is equivalent to one year and two months work. Although it was not difficult to do, it was not easy to do the work without pay. At that time there were many pharmacists from such countries as Korea, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Thanks to their better English, many of those from India and Pakistan took internships and got jobs fairly easily compared with those from Korea and Taiwan. To make matters worse, the job market was oversupplied, making it very difficult to get employment. Now it is impossible for pharmacists from foreign countries to immigrate here. But it is less difficult to be hired now. Then, due to the city fiscal crisis, it was hard to be hired as a pharmacist, I remember.

Some early-wave Korean immigrants also came to America by way of South America, Germany, or Canada. Mr. Lee, a garment factory owner, was born in Pyongyang, North Korea, and later moved to South Korea, where he ran a knitting factory.

> I was informed by my uncle who had studied in Brazil that the living conditions in any South American country are good. He told me there was no racism. So I immigrated to Paraguay first as an agricultural immigrant, and later to Argentina in 1965. At that time the minimum wage was better in Argentina than in the United States. I remember that it was only fifty cents for a good meal, and one could earn three dollars for one day's work in Argentina. In Buenos Aires, I ran a knitting mill. There were few Koreans. For ten years my business went well, employing ten workers. However, after I came to the United States to buy a machine, I decided to stay here. Immediately after I left, there was economic chaos in Buenos Aires.

In Germany and Canada, Koreans worked as miners, nurses, and ministers. One of my informants, Mrs. Yang, was a nurse in Germany; another, Reverend Chung, was a minister in Canada. A few early-wave immigrants were sponsored by female relatives—a mother's sister, for example, who had married an American serviceman stationed in Korea.

Among the post-1976 wave are two groups—those who brought in large amounts of capital and those who arrived with empty hands. The latter group migrated through the family reunification provisions. The former group brought in large sums of money after the Korean government lifted the $1,000 limit on capital outflow in 1978. Mrs. Park is a typical later-wave immigrant. She and her family immigrated to America in 1984 and immediately bought a craft store with money they had brought from Korea. The store cost $20,000 for "key money" to the former owner, $3,000 for rental deposit, and $900 for monthly rent. In Korea, her husband ran a transportation company.

In general, immigrants of both waves came here to seek political stability and pursue social mobility. The later wave had additional motives: Those who were rich came to invest; those who were poor came to survive. As economic conditions changed in Korea and people heard stories of success in America, more Koreans thought about emigration as an alternative.

Thus far I have only mentioned persons who immigrated through legal channels. Now I turn to those who came without proper documents, both the so-called "visa abusers" and undocumented border crossers. Among my informants, ten came on tourist or other nonimmigrant visas, and seven came without documents. Seven of the tourists have since regularized their status in the United States, but three still do not have green cards. Those who are middle and upper class in Korea find it easier to manipulate the immigration procedures, usually through sponsorship by relatives already here. But lower-class Koreans who have no kin to sponsor them are more desperate. For many, this entails being smuggled into the United States by way of South America, Mexico, or the Caribbean.

Among my informants, two entered via the Bahamas, one through Paraguay, and four by crossing the Mexican border. Before they left Korea, they were briefed on their migratory arrangements and paid large fees to Korean brokers, which included a share for local Latin American brokers. If they are caught crossing the U.S. border, their kin, friends, or brokers must pay a bond of delivery for aliens. They are not released until a final decision on their case is made. In most cases, deportation to Korea follows. Despite such experiences, a few are ready to try again.

The increasing numbers of people who enter the United States without proper documents are called *pigongsik imin* (informal immigrants) in Korean. As of now, their stories have not been documented by researchers. A 1985 National Research Council study defined such a new-

comer as "a noncitizen physically present in the United States who entered the country illegally and has not regularized his or her situation, or who has violated his or her terms of entry" (Levine, Hill, and Warren 1985: 225). About half the illegal immigrants in the United States are border crossers, and half are visa abusers—people who enter the country legally on temporary nonimmigrant visas but remain illegally.

Mrs. Chung was one of my informants who lacked proper documents. She traveled from Korea to Mexico, where she searched for other Koreans but encountered only Japanese. Eventually she met Mr. Park, who treated her to a Korean dinner. He couldn't believe that a woman would want to be smuggled into the United States. With his help, however, she traveled to Tijuana, within four hours of the U.S. border. There she took a bus from the airport, which dropped her at a Chinese motel. The motel was full of professional brokers, including three Koreans. She was so glad that she started to cry. She made contact by telephone with a Korean broker in Los Angeles, who told her what to do, step by step. In all, she needed $1,500.

She paid $10 for bus fare to the airport and $20 for a Mexican translator. Her group was taken on a ten-minute bus ride to the border. She saw fields on one side and a stony open area on the other. Group members were instructed to say "O.K." to whatever questions they were asked. They began walking. Mrs. Chung was wearing high heels, which hurt her feet. After some time, they came to an artificial tunnel under an electric fence. The group of four Koreans and one other person crawled into the tunnel and waited there from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. Then they boarded a farm truck carrying vegetables and fruit and crawled behind the seat to a space under the produce. After an hour they arrived in San Diego and were moved to a van. In the next hour they were transferred to seven different trucks. Finally, Mrs. Chung was dropped near Koreatown in Los Angeles. There she had to pay the rest of the fee. Her husband was shocked to learn of her arrival, believing she was still in Pusan. Later I heard more chilling stories about young female border crossers, who were often raped as well as deported.

Mr. Kang feels that he was deceived by brokers. He met a migration broker through his father's brother in Korea. He gave the broker 6 million wŏn (in 1984, about $10,000). The broker told him that there was a way to enter America directly and legally. Later, it turned out that everything in the process was illegal except for Mr. Kang's documents for training in agricultural technology. Seven people were in his group, which went to

Mexico City by plane. Then Mr. Kang flew to Tijuana, where he met the original broker. The broker reassured the group, telling them not to worry, and introduced a Mexican agent. The group was taken by bus to the nearby border, thirty minutes away. There they were told to walk, which meant climbing out of a steep valley. During the day they had to hide, and at night they could only crawl. There were twenty-seven people in the group, including a five-year-old child, and they had no food. They would crawl for five hundred meters and then stop. In this manner, they progressed for two days. Although it was hard to see anything at night, they finally crossed the border. Then they rode in a van for two hours. For three more days they had no food and slept on the ground. On the next morning they boarded another car, but fourteen miles later they were caught by an inspector.

Although they were so hungry that they cried, for three days they were held without food. They were kept for fifteen days in a detention camp. Then, after his father's brother paid a $3,500 bond of delivery for an alien, Mr. Kang took a plane to La Guardia Airport in New York City. It took him seven months to clear his debt, paying back $500 per month. During this time and afterward, he worked "off the books" in a Korean greengrocery. Now that he has lived through such hardships, he feels that nothing can frighten him.

In the future there will be more working-class immigrants from Korea, and perhaps some will enter the United States illegally. Although living conditions for both the working class and the middle class have improved greatly in Korea, dissatisfaction about wages has intensified since 1987, when it became legal to organize labor unions.

Downward Mobility

While current trends are producing greater diversity among Korean immigrants, the immigrant population is now relatively alike: Most are young, married, and highly educated; many were white-collar workers in Korea, and most are products of urban culture. Of my informants, 58 percent (N=91) are between the ages of twenty-one and forty (see table 3). About 67 percent (N=91) are married. Single persons account for 21 percent; divorced, separated, or widowed are 12 percent. (My data are consistent with the 1980 census data for New York and statistics from Los Angeles.)

Table 3. Age distribution and sex of informants (N = 91)

Age	Male	Female	Total
Up to 20	0	1	1
21 to 25	5	0	5
26 to 30	15	4	19
31 to 35	8	3	11
36 to 40	10	7	17
41 to 45	6	0	6
46 to 50	4	3	7
51 to 55	7	2	9
56 to 60	0	3	3
61 to 65	2	1	3
66 to 70	2	3	5
Age unknown	5		5
Total	64	27	91

Among my informants, 25 percent are college graduates, and another 28 percent attended college. In all, 75 percent were employed in Korea, and the remaining 25 percent were housewives. Some 56 percent had held white-collar jobs as professionals, proprietors, managers, civil servants, or skilled workers. In New York, however, only 17 percent (N=109) hold white-collar jobs. The majority (73 percent) are involved in small business, either as employers (36 percent) or employees (37 percent). The rest (10 percent) are unemployed, students, or retired. It is evident that many immigrants experience downward mobility from white-collar positions in Korea to small business status or manual work in America. Because of difficulties with licensure and language, many professionals do not find jobs comparable to those in their home country (see Chapter 2). For instance, a former engineer found it almost impossible to work as an engineer in New York unless he went through training again.

Some immigrants are able to regain their occupational status. Yu reports that the percentage of professionals rises and the percentage of manual laborers falls as the length of residence for immigrants increases, indicating a general upward occupational mobility (1990: 14). The typical pattern of occupational mobility, nonetheless, is first the transition from white-collar work in Korea to manual work in America and later, to small business proprietor.

Many new immigrants work in low-paying, dead-end jobs—for example, Mrs. Lee, a teacher in Korea and now a garment factory worker.

> At first it hurt my pride. But I came to think that I would make the desperate effort, however. I envied those who did well. The first day I earned only six dollars for ten hours work. On the second day I earned twelve dollars. It was difficult to do a manual job, and it was not easy to work under someone, compared with what I had done in Korea. In my class, as a teacher I was in charge of the students. As I worked with many workers here, sometimes it led to friction. However, I tried to consider garment work as only the first step. And I could maintain close friendships with fellow church members, regardless of our different levels of education.

She added that she has tried to lead a frugal life since her arrival in America. The only thing that she has purchased here is a pair of jeans for her children.

American Fever and Migration

So far I have examined the broad framework of Korean immigration to America. But the question of why any specific individual immigrates remains. Koreans do not emigrate because they cannot survive in their home country but because they dream about America (compare I. Kim 1981). This dream is especially true of the early wave of immigrants, those arriving between 1965 and 1976. The later wave, from 1976 till the present, has additional reasons. But all immigrants are fed by cultural colonialism from America. In Korea, this is described as American fever.

Several informants told me stories similar to this one: "Without any deep thought, I was just eager to go to America. I was told again and again that America is a wonderful and beautiful country, full of gold, indeed a paradise in this world. In a word, I had the American fever [migukpyŏng]." American fever in Korea is like a sickness. It is contagious, and it spreads. People call those gripped by this fever ghosts, beings eaten or possessed by the Western spirit. American fever is more than interest in American culture. It is a cultural complex of longing for political, economic, social, and cultural well-being, all identified with U.S. society. The only cure lies in leaving for the United States.

This fever has developed in the context of postcolonial Korea. Neither cultural colonialism—rooted in American political, economic, and military involvement in the Korean peninsula—nor the fever it has produced have been seriously studied. Yet migukpyŏng *is* a cultural reality discussed by Korean immigrants. For instance, more than half of medical school

graduates from Yonsei University, a prestigious private university in Seoul, are said to be in America through immigration; and at many nursing schools in Korea, most students say they plan to immigrate. Imagining the journey to America becomes a way of life—a rite de passage, in anthropological terminology. As I. Kim explains, "One of the psychological consequences of the booming economy is that consciousness of social mobility has been much intensified even among those unsuccessful in achieving a higher status. This mobility consciousness stimulates the inclinations of mobility-oriented Koreans to emigrate to the United States, where better economic opportunities are expected" (1981: 96).

As we have seen, however, American fever includes aspirations for more than just economic well-being. Some immigrants now in New York mentioned fascination with America and curiosity about this new world as reasons for leaving Korea. I predict that in the future this sociocultural inducement will play a more significant role in emigration once the Korean political and economic situation improves. Mr. Choi, who runs a chess parlor in Elmhurst and sells Korean herbs, is an example of a recent Korean cultural refugee: "In Korea I had an American foster-father whom I knew since I was twelve years old. Because of my foster father's influence, I did not care for Korean food, which is very hot and spicy.[7] I was very close to my American foster-father, learning English and much about American culture from him. My foster-father was an American colonel in Korea, and later died in Texas."

Mr. and Mrs. Park are both pharmacists. Mrs. Park said that it was her husband who wanted to immigrate: "We had been in Korea around thirty years, and he said, 'Why don't we try to go to a new world, with great ambition and with a frontier spirit?' We both thought that Korea is small, and we are not very crazy about Korean food. We would suffer less than others from going abroad since my husband has been in *Katusa* [Koreans Attached to the United States Army], and he is familiar with Western food to some extent. However, I opposed his desire for immigration as I heard that life in America is tough and bitter. But I *was* curious about America, to be honest with you. After we petitioned, we hesitated for six months." Others, especially professionals such as doctors and ministers, expressed

7. For most people, Korean food is very important for sustaining Korean identity. Some of my interviewees told me that they were worried about American food: "How can a Korean survive by living on bread only?" But their fears turned out to be groundless: Korean immigrants have access to plenty of Korean food wherever there is a sizable Korean community.

the desire both to further their education and to learn more about America.

What about the later wave of new immigrants? What is the content of their American fever? By the late 1970s and 1980s, poorer Koreans faced greater economic problems than early-wave immigrants had. Their prospects as workers in Korean companies offered little opportunity for advancement. One later-wave informant told me, "If we had remained in Korea, it would be impossible for us to educate our children. However, here we can even afford to give our kids piano or violin lessons. So for that, we are very grateful, all due to immigration to the United States." In addition, there are few Korean families today without at least one emigrant relative in America. This makes information about American life widely available through networks of kin or friends. These contacts bring not only news but also judgments and perceptions about life in America. These evaluations help shape understandings about what is possible in the United States.

Notions about American fever and migration in general differ for immigrant women and men. As they are exposed to the American notion of "ladies first," women see America as a place where they will be treated much better than in Korea (see Chapter 6). Some women such as Mrs. Park, who now works at a nail salon, perceived America as a place of economic independence for women. This was her major reason for agreeing with the family decision to immigrate.

Thus, the reasons for immigration are complex. Sometimes I heard statements that emphasized certain reasons over others. For example, when my respondents were asked to talk about why they had migrated, quite often those with children mentioned better educational opportunities for their offspring. But one informant, who works for a Korean driving school in Elmhurst, pointed out : "Many Korean immigrants say that they decided to immigrate to America in order to offer their children a better education. They tell a lie by saying so. They want to justify their emigration and to save their face in front of others. In fact, I think that they run away from the home country in order to enjoy better economic well-being. Otherwise, why do they work twenty-four hours, not even taking care of their children properly? In my opinion, if they think of their children's education as the most important reason for migration, they could send their children abroad later."

In Korea, the culturally articulated Confucian tradition values everything related to education, although in the past formal education was

available only for the elite. Government policies in the 1950s and 1960s emphasized the importance of schooling. But "my children's education" as a motive for migration is more easily justified than "my material success," which cannot be justified by appeals to the Confucian tradition. Thus, education for their children is indeed part of the complex of factors motivating many Koreans to immigrate. Immigrants firmly believe that their children's education is a route to social mobility for the family. Statements about migration for the sake of children's education thus involve at least four considerations: education as a marker of class status, the ability of children to provide care for their elderly parents, a concern for generational continuity stemming from the tradition of ancestor worship, and the denial of more selfish motivations in leaving Korea for America. The first consideration is closely related to Bourdieu's interpretation of class reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970). He proposes that there is "a very close relationship linking cultural practices . . . to education capital (measured by qualifications) and secondarily, to social origins (measured by father's occupation)" (1984: 13).

The relationship between migration and the desire for political stability is very close. In this regard migratory considerations are related to class background and the macropolitical situation. If a person is from a middle- or upper-class background, political impediments to mobility may be cited as influencing migration. If a person is poor or from a lower-class background, economic upward mobility is usually paramount. But for all persons, economic limitations are tied to Korea's level of political turmoil. One of my informants, for instance, said that he decided to leave Korea because his business did not go well: "I used to run a factory in Seoul. Student demonstrations were serious and greatly influenced my employees. How could I run my factory peacefully?" So he declared bankruptcy and emigrated to America. For him, political and economic motives influenced one another.

Few of my informants specify only political reasons for immigration; however, their comparison between life in Korea and America includes such considerations, intermixed with others we have examined. While they often criticized dictatorship and political instability in Korea, few mentioned it as their primary reason for immigration. Many Koreans strongly believe that a person should stay in Korea if he or she considers the country's political future important. Only when a person is targeted for his or her political activity are political reasons a valid excuse for

migration. If a person is dissatisfied with Korea's political instability but has not been mistreated for political beliefs, he or she should not use that justification. Thus, Korean immigrants seldom articulate their reasons for migration in political terms alone. Nevertheless, it is apparent that, as a result of turmoil in Korea, political factors have influenced emigration. For example, in the 1976 ax-murder incident at the DMZ (demilitarized zone) in Korea, two American officers were killed, reportedly by North Korean soldiers, following a dispute over trimming tree branches. Immediately after that incident, deep anxiety about another Korean war swept through some elite segments of Seoul's population (I. Kim 1981: 34). The incident had little effect on emigration in 1976, but in subsequent years the number of people seeking to leave increased.

Reasons for Migration: Immigrant Voices

In sum, less than 3 percent of my informants mentioned political factors as prime motives for their emigration. Some 48 percent mentioned economic reasons, including securing resources for their children's education; 38 percent mentioned familial or kinship considerations (see Chapters 4 and 5); and 11 percent mentioned sociocultural reasons, with some overtly referring to American fever. These explanations should be analyzed as part of an ideological discourse in which my interviewees are consciously and unconsciously appealing to me, citing the reasons they think they should mention. Generally, my respondents mentioned more than one reason as our dialogues continued. Economic reasons for migration were most readily offered. They include three subcategories: For people of lower-class origin, migration was for survival; for most middle- and upper-class immigrants, migration was for better political and economic well-being and capital investment; for others (such as those who were bankrupt or fired in midcareer), migration to America offered a new beginning.

An early-wave immigrant named Mr. Kye came to study new medical technology. He ran a drugstore before he left Korea. As a pharmacist, he immigrated to America in 1974 under the occupational preference: "I had made up my mind to learn new technological developments in America and return to Korea. However, now I feel hopeless about medical technology. That's because, in my opinion, it is monopolized by America and there is a rigid division of labor internationally. . . . Perhaps we can

achieve our own momentum in the newly developing disciplines, like computer science." In the mid-1980s, Mr. Kye returned to Korea.

Typically, Korean immigrants express a combination of reasons—opportunity for children's education, self-improvement, and a desire for a higher living standard. Mrs. Park, for example, came to America in 1984. Her daughter, who immigrated as a nurse but no longer works as one, invited Mrs. Park and her family to join her. Mrs. Park told me, "I thought of educating my youngest son here and of making a fortune in America. That's because I heard that in America it is easy to make a fortune, and that all legitimate trades are equally honorable." This last statement deserves attention. It illustrates how Koreans perceive American society: that there is equality in terms of mental and manual labor and even among different occupations.

Many people immigrate due to familial ties, the second set of prime reasons most often cited by my interviewers. In order to understand the role of family ties in the immigrant community, it is necessary to understand Korean kinship, a topic we will study in later chapters. Thus, my remarks here are introductory. Korean culture puts much emphasis on family bonds. For example, if a household head decides to migrate, each family member is supposed to follow, no matter how old he or she is, especially if the person is unmarried. Some in their twenties or thirties immediately follow the decision of the household, not wanting to be left by themselves. Others, including older parents and young children, join adult relatives later through family reunification. A few also migrate because of a family dispute in Korea. Mr. Sung runs a sewing machine store in Jackson Heights, assisted by his wife. In Korea his wife was in favor of emigration, but he did not want to leave. He said that the reason his wife wanted to leave was that she had problems with his family, in particular with his mother.

Despite the particularities of each individual's decision to emigrate, it is likely that the changing political and economic situation in Korea will continue to spur migration for some time to come. No one, however, can predict whether emigrants will continue to come to America if the U.S. economy enters a new recession or an even worse economic phase. In the past, Korean emigrants have followed the flow of capital and labor to the Middle East, South America, and Vietnam as well as to Germany, Canada, and the United States. Events within Korea will also influence emigration. For example, after the political reforms of 1987 and the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, many overseas Koreans noticed new economic growth and political

liberalization in Korea and thought about returning home.[8] This was particularly true for middle- and upper-class Korean immigrants. In addition, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act in the United States forced some Koreans who could not secure immigration status to return to Korea. They could not find employment in the United States under the employer-sanctions provision of this legislation.

In this chapter, I placed the questions of how and why Koreans immigrate to the United States in a historical and structural framework. I also presented the voices of some individual immigrants discussing why they came to America. Koreans come here with their own version of an American dream, a dream shaped by their experiences in Korea as well as their subjective perceptions of America. In the following chapters, I explore how new immigrants seek to realize this dream through their daily experience in New York City.

8. According to the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1989 there were 6,176 overseas Koreans who had returned permanently to Korea, a 44.5 percent increase over the previous year (*Korea Times*, 4 January 1990). For some of these returnees this represents a "reverse brain drain," where South Korea's surging economy and liberalized political environment have attracted expatriates, many of them academic scientists (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 15 November 1989).