

## Research Article

# The Impact of Acculturation on Informal and Formal Volunteering of Korean Americans in the United States

Hee Soun Jang – University of North Texas

Lili Wang – Arizona State University

Carlton F. Yoshioka – Arizona State University

*This study examines the impact of acculturation on Korean Americans' decisions to volunteer either for secular and religious organizations or informally. The results show that language difficulty and Korean identity lower the likelihood of secular volunteering, but not of informal volunteering. Koreans who are Protestants or Catholics, and those with higher levels of education, are more likely to volunteer formally, but not informally. The findings indicate formal volunteering is strongly associated with acculturation factors, along with personal and social variables but informal volunteering appears to be independent from and not complementary of the other two types of volunteering.*

Keywords: Acculturation, Formal Volunteering, Informal Volunteering, Korean Americans

As the American population has become increasingly diverse in the past few decades, minority civic participation, including volunteering, has gained growing attention among scholars and practitioners. Understanding the factors that encourage minorities to give their time to organizations or to friends and family is critical to a country that wishes to foster voluntary participation and to maintain its strong civic tradition. Asian Americans are one of the fastest growing minorities in the United States. From 2000 to 2010, the Asian population increased by 46%, reaching 14.7 million, or 4.8% of the total population in the country (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010). Much of this growth comes from foreign-born Asian immigrants. Close to 62% of single-race Asian Americans are foreign-born or immigrants, who account for approximately 28% of the total foreign-born population in the U.S. (Grieco & Trevelyan, 2010). Additionally, Asian Americans are the most culturally diverse minority group in the country. Among the over twenty Asian-American subgroups, the Chinese, Asian-Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese and South Korean are the largest, each with a population over one million.

Despite the rapid growth and increased significance of Asian Americans in the United States, their voluntary participation remains low. The Current Population Survey shows that 19% of Asian Americans volunteered in 2009, compared to 28.3% of whites and 20.2% of African Americans. Although the percentage of Asian Americans who volunteered in 2010 increased slightly to 19.6%, it is still lower than for whites (27.8%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Little is known about the factors that facilitate or hinder Asian American volunteering, as very few studies have focused on their volunteering behavior (Eckland & Park, 2005; Sundeen, Garcia, & Wang, 2007). Most of the existing studies on Asian American volunteering are qualitative and regional (Smith, Shue, Vest, & Villarreal 1994, 1999; Smith, Shue, & Villarreal, 1992). While these qualitative studies provide rich accounts of Asian Americans' experiences of volunteering and motivations to volunteer, their small sample size and lack of systematic comparison across Asian subgroups prevent a generalization of the findings.

Jang, H. S., Wang, L., & Yoshioka, C. F. (2016). The impact of acculturation on informal and formal volunteering of Korean Americans in the United States. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 2(1), 31-47. doi:10.20899/jpna.2.1.31-47

Sundeen, Garcia, and Wang (2007) examined the formal volunteering of three Asian-American subgroups—Asian Indians, Chinese and Filipinos--and compared them with the immigrants of each subgroup of diverse volunteering activities, using a national survey on volunteering. The study found that Asian Indians, Chinese and Filipinos have significant differences in their voluntary participation. First, each subgroup tends to volunteer for different types of organizations. Filipinos volunteer most often for religious organizations (more than 42% of Filipino respondents volunteer for religious organizations), while Asian Indians are the least likely to do so (only 1.6% report religious volunteering). In contrast, Asian Indians are most likely to volunteer for children's education (31%) and social and community service (25%), compared to Filipinos (23% for children's education and 10% for social and community service) and Chinese (13% for children's education and 21% for social and community service) who reported in a 2004 Bureau of Labor Statistics survey on volunteering. Secondly, Filipinos volunteer the highest number of hours in a year (158 hours), followed by Asian Indians (81 hours) and Chinese (73 hours). Thirdly, the likelihood of volunteerism amongst the three Asian subgroups correlates with different personal characteristics and resources. Female Filipinos are more likely to volunteer than their male counterparts, while no gender difference exists in volunteering among Chinese and Asian Indians. Additionally, Chinese and Filipino volunteerism positively associates with their household income, while that of Asian Indians positively relates to their educational attainment. These findings suggest that future studies of Asian volunteering should consider examining Asian subgroups separately, as their diverse cultural backgrounds may shape their volunteering behavior in unique ways.

Due to insufficient sample size, Sundeen et al. (2007) did not examine the volunteering activities of other major Asian subgroups, such as immigrants from South Korea and their native counterparts. Korean Americans are notably different from other Asian-American subgroups in their culture, religious belief, language and other socioeconomic characteristics. For example, the majority of Korean Americans in the United States are Protestants (61%), while most Filipino Americans are Catholic (65%), about half of Asian Indians are Hindu (51%), and half of Chinese Americans (52%) describe themselves as religiously unaffiliated (The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2012). Given these differences, it is unclear whether Korean Americans would share a similar pattern of volunteering with any of the Asian subgroups that Sundeen, Garcia and Wang studied: for example, the types of organizations for which they volunteer ; how personal, social and cultural resources shape their volunteering; how many hours they volunteer, etc. This study will expand our knowledge of Asian Americans' volunteering by focusing on Korean Americans, a subgroup left out in Sundeen et al. (2007).

Additionally, Sundeen et al. (2007) did not examine the influence of religiosity on volunteering, as the dataset they used had no information on respondents' religious beliefs and religious attendance. Numerous studies on immigrant and minority philanthropy, however, have shown that religiosity significantly influences the volunteering behavior of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans and immigrants (Ecklund & Park 2005; Wang, Yoshioka, & Ashcraft, 2013). Given the importance of religion and religious attendance in Korean Americans' lives, we will extend the literature by examining how religiosity shapes Korean Americans' voluntary participation in community service.

Most of the existing empirical studies on Asian American volunteering (Eckland & Park, 2005; Sundeen et al., 2007) examined formal volunteer activities (doing unpaid work in the context of a formal organization), but did not include informal volunteering (doing unpaid work for the well-being of family, friends, and the community at large). While ethnic minorities may volunteer less for formal organizations, they are more likely to contribute their time to help

friends, families and neighbors (Carson, 1999; Wang, 2011). Therefore, it is significant to study informal volunteering to gain a better understanding of ethnic minorities' behavior.

A recent study by Lee and Moon (2011) examined Korean immigrants' volunteerism for ethnic and mainstream organizations in the United States. The study did not separate religious and secular volunteering, which could be considerably different between minority immigrants. As Handy and Greenspan (2009) found, Canadian immigrants were more likely to volunteer for religious congregations that are ethnically homogenous than for secular organizations that are more diverse. Consequently, we will extend the literature by examining whether Korean Americans are more inclined to volunteer for religious or secular organizations. In addition, we will study how decisions to volunteer for each type of organization are shaped by the level of acculturation and other personal characteristics and social resources.

Using data from the Johnson Center for Philanthropy's (2009) *Charitable Giving and Volunteering among Korean Americans Survey*, this study bridges the gap in the literature by exploring the informal and formal volunteering activities of Korean Americans and the influence of acculturation on their decisions to volunteer. Specifically, we seek to answer the following questions: 1) Do Korean Americans participate more in secular and religious than in informal volunteering activities? 2) To what extent does acculturation affect Korean Americans' secular, religious and informal volunteering, respectively? 3) What other factors determine Korean Americans' likelihood of secular, religious and informal volunteering? In the next section we review the literature and develop a theoretical model on the ways acculturation and other socioeconomic factors structure Korean Americans' formal and informal volunteering.

## **Literature Review and Hypotheses**

An individual's decision to volunteer, giving time freely for the benefit of another person, group or cause, and the level of voluntary involvement are jointly influenced by his or her socioeconomic, cultural and human capitals (Wilson, 2000). The extant literature of minority volunteerism indicates that minorities and immigrants have a different propensity or level of voluntary participation compared to their majority or native counterparts (Sundeen et al., 2007; Sundeen, Garcia, & Raskoff, 2009; Wang et al., 2013). This could be attributed to various resources, such as social networks, income and education, which encourage minorities and immigrants to volunteer formally and informally.

### *Acculturation*

Acculturation is one of the most important explanatory factors in the study of ethnic minority populations, including their volunteerism (Sundeen et al., 2007; Sundeen et al. 2009; Tucker & Santiago, 2013). It reflects the extent to which individuals acquire the values, behaviors, life-styles and language of the host culture (Zane & Mak, 2003). Numerous measures have been developed to assess behaviors and attitudes related to acculturation, including language use: preferences and proficiency; social affiliations; daily living habits; cultural traditions and customs; perceived prejudice and discrimination; cultural identification and pride; and generational status (Berry, 1997; Fletcher, Campbell, & Fast, 2007; Tucker & Santiago, 2013).

The acculturation literature maintains that ethnic groups possess distinctive cultures (values, beliefs, norms and attitudes) and exhibit distinctive behavioral patterns. When ethnic minorities and immigrants encounter the mainstream culture, they experience varying degrees of cultural conflicts. The greater the cultural distance (that is, the dissimilarity of the two cultures in

language, religion, etc.), the greater the cultural conflict and the greater the need of cultural learning and adjusting (Berry, 1997). Language proficiency facilitates the cultural adaptation and learning process. Research on minority and immigrant volunteerism shows that inability to communicate fluently in the host language acts as a principle barrier to discourage participation in volunteer or civic activities (Fletcher et al., 2007; Tucker & Santiago, 2013; Wang & Handy, 2013). Additionally, the perceived cultural distance and language barrier could influence the types of organizations that attract minorities and immigrants to work for them. Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) found that immigrants were motivated to establish their own community organizations and participate in ethnic-oriented secular or religious groups that provide them a sense of belonging and a degree of familiarity by interacting with people from the same cultural background or speaking the same language. Being connected to ethnic-oriented groups also helps minorities and immigrants build social networks that could offer informal help or provide information on jobs and other opportunities (Lee & Moon, 2011). As a result, immigrants, particularly those who have limited language proficiency, find more comfort volunteering for ethnic-oriented organizations or religious congregations in the early stage of migration (Handy & Greenspan 2009). According to the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (2013), compared to other ethnic groups surveyed, Korean Americans have the highest level of limited English proficiency. Approximately 67% of Korean Americans speak English less than “very well,” compared to 37% of all Asian Americans nationally. In view of the potential impact of the language barrier on volunteering and the overall level of English proficiency of Korean Americans, we expect:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Korean Americans who speak English at home to be more likely than their counterparts to engage in formal secular and religious volunteering, but not in informal volunteering.*

Acculturation experiences also differ by generation and citizenship. First-generation immigrants have been socialized to their own culture of origin and must adapt to the culture of the host society after immigration (Zane & Mak, 2003). U.S.-born ethnic minorities, in contrast, are exposed to a multicultural context beginning from birth that comprises the parents’ ethnic culture and American culture. Their values, life styles and behaviors, including volunteer work, would be similar to those of the mainstream culture. In a study of Asian American volunteering, Sundeen et al. (2007) find that second-generation native-born Asian Americans, Chinese, Asian Indians, Filipinos and naturalized Asian immigrants, as well as immigrants from India and the Philippines, are more likely to volunteer than other non-naturalized first-generation Asian immigrants. We anticipate this finding will apply to Korean Americans as well. Therefore, we posit:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Korean Americans who are citizens or second-generation immigrants are more likely to engage in formal volunteering than noncitizen first-generation immigrants.*

Cultural identity, practices of cultural traditions and the cultural stress of respondents also indicate the level of acculturation. Wang and Handy (2013) found that cultural identity affects Canadian immigrants’ participation in local organizations. For Korean Americans we expect those who identify themselves as Korean, who practice Korean traditions and holidays more often, and who experience stronger cultural conflict to be less likely to engage in formal volunteering and more likely to volunteer informally to help family, friends and neighbors. Therefore,

*H<sub>3</sub>: Korean Americans who identify themselves as Koreans are less likely to engage in formal volunteering than their counterparts.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Korean Americans who practice Korean traditions and often observe Korean holidays are less likely to engage in formal volunteering than their counterparts.*

*H<sub>5</sub>: Korean Americans who experience stronger cultural conflict are less likely to engage in formal volunteering than their counterparts.*

### *Religiosity*

Religion shapes people's values and beliefs. It is one of the main institutions that foster American civic life. Since most religions encourage believers to care for others and give to the needy, they can promote pro-social behaviors, such as helping, volunteering in local communities, and charitable giving (Cnaan, Kasternakis, & Wineburg 1993; Musick, Wilson, & Bynum, 2000; Wilson & Janoski, 1995). Furthermore, religious congregations provide a venue for volunteering. Handy and Greenspan (2009) found that immigrants who have been members of a congregation longer and who attend service more often are more likely to volunteer and to volunteer more hours. Ecklund and Park (2005) found that religious attendance significantly increases community volunteering among Asian Americans. Moreover, Protestant Asian Americans are more likely to volunteer than their non-religious counterparts. Since over 60% of Korean Americans are Protestants (The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2012), we expect those with this religious affiliation to be more likely to volunteer for both secular and religious organizations.

*H<sub>6</sub>: Korean Americans with religious affiliations are more likely to volunteer for both secular and religious organizations.*

### *Control Variables*

An individual's socioeconomic characteristics, including educational attainment, household income and homeownership, determine that person's social status. The dominant status theory argues that social status is positively associated with voluntary-organization participation (Smith, 1994; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Educational attainment is the strongest and most consistent predictor of volunteerism among ethnic-minority groups, immigrants and the general population (Smith, 1994; Wang et al., 2013; Wilson, 2000). For minorities and immigrants education in the United States provides opportunities to become integrated into the mainstream culture, to learn about the values of civic engagement and to practice volunteering (i.e., through school-based community service). Accordingly, immigrants who graduated from American educational institutions are more likely to engage in formal volunteering than those who completed the highest degree in their home country. Statistics show that Asian Americans have the highest educational attainment of any racial or ethnic group in the United States. Close to 90% of Asian Americans graduated from high school, and 52% have a bachelor's degree or an advanced degree, a rate much higher than that of whites (33%) and other minority groups (17%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), and the highest rate among all foreign-born racial/ethnic groups (Crissey, 2009). Among Asian subgroups Korean Americans have a higher percentage of college graduates than some other subgroups, such as Cambodians and Hmong (Zhou & Kim, 2006). The overall high educational attainment indicates great potential for Asian Americans, including Koreans, to engage in formal volunteering.

Household income tends to be positively associated with voluntary participation among the general population (Smith, 1994), as higher income provides a sense of financial stability that allows or encourages people to volunteer or contribute their time for free. In a study of Asian-

American philanthropy, Chao (2001) argues that Asian-American immigrants go through three stages of philanthropic activity: the survive stage, the help stage and the invest stage. They become more involved in mainstream philanthropy by helping and investing as they gain more financial stability and economic security. We extend this argument to Korean Americans' decision to volunteer. Korean Americans with higher household incomes could be more likely to volunteer as they become less constrained by the need to earn money. Data suggest that Asian Americans overall, but particularly Koreans, have greater financial resources to support their decisions to volunteer than other minorities. Over 60% of Asian American households have an annual income of \$50,000 or more, compared to 54% of non-Hispanic white households and 36% of those of other racial/ethnic groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). However, in terms of the level of involvement, Freeman (1997) finds that the higher the income, the lower the number of hours volunteered in general. The negative relationship between income and volunteering can be explained by the rational-choice theory, which views volunteering as the opportunity-cost of working. People with higher income are likely to volunteer for fewer hours, since their opportunity-cost of giving up work is high. This applies to Korean Americans as well.

Homeownership not only indicates a person's wealth, but also reflects the degree to which one is integrated into the community and has a stake in its amenities, services and general quality of life (Smith, 1994). Homeowners are inclined to live in a community longer than renters, which helps them develop a sense of connection and, build social networks, while increasing their chance of being asked to volunteer by either friends or formal organizations (Rotolo, Wilson, & Hughes, 2010).

Family is an important socialization forum for various aspects of civic engagement, including volunteering, and we found multiple perspectives to understand the impact of family status on volunteering decisions. For example, Wilson and Musick (1997) reported that being married and having children increase the chance of volunteering. People with children may learn about volunteering opportunities through their interaction with other parents in the neighborhood or with schools and organizations that serve youth and children. This is particularly important for immigrant parents, who may have limited social connections to other types of formal institutions (Wang et al., 2013). The volunteerism literature also shows that married people are more likely to volunteer than single people (Wilson, 2000). Nonetheless, single people without children may volunteer more hours since they have greater discretionary time for non-family activities and may want to develop social networks through formal volunteering (Sundeen, 1990). Likewise, married Korean Americans, particularly those with children, could be more likely to volunteer, while single Korean Americans without children could volunteer more hours.

Employment may broaden Korean Americans' social connections and thus increase their chances of being asked to volunteer, as a growing number of corporations encourage and organize their employees to volunteer for local nonprofits. Still, employment could also reduce the free time available for unpaid voluntary work (Markham & Bonjean, 1996; Wilson, 2000). Sundeen et al. (2007) find that Asian immigrants, employed part-time, are significantly more disposed to volunteer than those who are unemployed, while full-time employed Asian immigrants are similar to the unemployed in their volunteering propensity. Therefore, in this study we control for employment status in our examination of Korean Americans' volunteering. The gender difference in the inclination to volunteer may vary across cultures (Gaskin & Smith, 1997). Dominant status theory argues that individuals who are characterized by a more dominant set of social positions and roles are more likely to volunteer (Smith, 1983). In a traditionally male-dominant culture, like that of many Asian countries, women may be encouraged to take a domestic role or to volunteer only for certain types of organizations, such as those serving youth or disadvantaged populations, but not for political activities. In a study of

Asian-Indian volunteerism, Kurien (2002) finds that in some Pan-Indian voluntary organizations, like the Indian Association of North Texas, the majority of individuals who had served on the board were men, which reflects the male-dominant culture of the Asian-Indian community. However, Sundeen et al. (2007) find that Asian-American females and Filipino females are more likely to volunteer, but overall the gender differences are not significant among Chinese, Asian Indians or other Asian immigrants. Studies also show that formal volunteering peaks at an individual's middle age. In this study, we control for both gender and age.

### *Formal Volunteering and Informal Volunteering*

Informal volunteering is more personal and is not organized, and the donors and recipients are likely to already have a relationship that results in an obligatory response. In this situation helping behavior is dependent more on factors such as opportunity, resources and ability (Wilson & Musick, 1997). The literature on volunteering suggests that ethnic minorities and immigrants are more likely to volunteer informally than to volunteer for formal organizations (Wang et al., 2010). Sundeen et al. (2007, 2009) recommend continued research on informal volunteering, acculturation and other demographic variables on ethnic and immigrant groups in order to fully understand the conceptual framework of volunteering. For Korean Americans, we expect acculturation factors to impact the level of activity in informal volunteering that helps family, friends and neighbors.

## **Data and Methods**

Data for the empirical test were derived from a web-based survey of *Charitable Giving and Volunteering among Korean Americans* conducted in 2009. This web survey was administered by the newspaper *Korea Daily* and Joong Ang Broadcasting Corporation, a major Korean-American news media organization in California. It was first posted on the main page of the *Korea Daily* website ([www.koreadaily.com](http://www.koreadaily.com)); newspaper (both web and print) and radio advertisements followed. The survey targeted Korean Americans residing in California and was administered both in English and Korean to minimize the impact of language difficulty on our sample. It was online for a month in January 2009; we obtained a total of 1,505 responses. After removing responses from outside California and cases with substantial missing data, our final sample for this study included 769 Koreans who are legal residents of California, including 427 (55%) immigrants with U.S. citizenship, 329 (43%) with permanent residency, and 13 (2%) with the permanent residency equivalent investor visa (EB-5).

The questionnaire included extensive questions about Korean Americans' philanthropic giving and volunteering. We address volunteering in three major philanthropic areas: (1) formal, secular nonprofit volunteering; (2) formal, religious nonprofit volunteering; and (3) informal ethnic-based volunteering. The respondents were asked whether they engaged in any of the three forms of volunteering in 2008 and the hours volunteered per month for each area. As shown in Table 1, 50 % of respondents participated in formal, secular volunteering, 70% participated in religious volunteering, and 65% volunteered informally for friends and relatives. The survey also asked questions regarding multiple dimensions of acculturation: cultural identity, generation, religion, education, occupation, marital status, gender, age, annual household income, housing situation, and so on.

We employed binary probit models to predict whether Korean Americans participated in secular, religious or informal volunteering activities in 2008. Volunteering in the three

**Table 1.** Measurements and Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variables		Percent (Std. Dev.)
	Measurement of Decision to Volunteer	
Secular Volunteering	Participation in volunteering 1= Yes	50 % (0.50)
Religious Volunteering	0= No	70 % (0.46)
Informal Volunteering		65 % (0.48)
Independent Variables		Mean (Std. Dev.)
Indicators of Acculturation		
Language Difficulty	Q: I feel nervous about communicating in English. 1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree: 1 (6.1%), 2 (16.9%), 3 (30%), 4 (35.6%), 5 (11.4%)	3.29 (1.00)
Korean Identity	Q: How much do you identify as a Korean? 1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree: 1 (0.7%), 2 (0.9%), 3 (12.9%), 4 (28.0%), 5 (57.6%)	4.41 (0.80)
Cultural Stress	Confirmatory Factor Analysis has been employed to capture cultural stress of respondents Questions grouped are: Q1: I feel treated differently in social situations. Q2: I feel nervous about communicating in English Q3: I feel challenged, due to differences between Korean and American-style cultural norms The answer was measured on a scale where 1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree.	-0.01 (0.86)
Korean Tradition	Q: How important is it for you to preserve Korean culture? 1=not important at all to 5= very important: 1 (0.4%), 2 (3.6%), 3 (16.5%), 4 (33.8%), 5 (45.6%)	4.21 (0.87)
Citizenship	1=US citizen, 0=Others	0.55 (0.49)
Generation	1= Born in the US or immigrated as a minor to the US, 0= 1 <sup>st</sup> generation Korean	0.23 (0.42)
Indicators of Religiosity		
Protestant	1= Protestant, 0= Other	0.71 (0.45)
Catholic	1= Catholic, 0= Other	0.13 (0.33)
Buddhist	1= Buddhist, 0= Other	0.04 (0.20)
Control Variables		
Education	Combined Korean education with US education; Highest degree earned from either Korean or US institutions. 0=None (0%) 1=Elementary school up to 6 <sup>th</sup> grade (0.9%) 2=Middle school (7-9 <sup>th</sup> grades) (0%)	4.85 (1.02)



	3=High school (10-12 <sup>th</sup> grade) (10.3%)	
	4=Two year associate college degree (16.0%)	
	5=Four year college degree (51.9%)	
	6=Master's degree (16.1%)	
	7=Ph.D., MD, DDS, JD, Ed.D. etc (4.8%)	
Age	1=18-24 (1.2%); 2=25-34 (17.4%); 3=35-44 (36.8%); 4=45-54 (29.5%); 5=55-64 (11.4%); 6=65+ (3.6%)	3.43 (1.05)
Household Income	1=\$0-\$24,999 (6.4%); 2=\$25,000-\$49,999(25.0%); 3=\$50,000-\$74,999 (23.7%); 4=\$75,000- \$99,999(20.0%); 5=\$100,000-\$149,999 (17.6%); 6=\$150,000-\$199,999 (5.3%); 7=\$200,000 and over (2.1%)	3.41 (1.43)
Employment Status	1=Employed full time, 0=Other	0.62 (0.48)
Homeownership	1= Homeowner, 0=others	0.48 (0.50)
Children	1=Family with child(ren), 0=No child	0.64 (0.47)
Married	1= Married, 0=Single	0.82 (0.38)
Male	1=Male, 0=Female	0.67 (0.46)

philanthropic areas is coded 1 if the respondent volunteered and 0 if not. For more meaningful interpretation of the results, we also used the Clarify program to produce predicted probability of each of the statistically significant independent variables (Tomz, Wittenberg, & King, 2001).<sup>1</sup> For expository purposes we focus on four significant acculturation variables (Language difficulty, Korean identity, Korean tradition, and Citizenship) from the probit model and illustrate the effect of each variable on the secular volunteering in figure 1.

### *Independent variables*

*Acculturation.* Acculturation is a key explanatory factor in our research; we measured this social concept with multiple indicators including language difficulty, stress from American culture, Korean culture identity, ethnic traditions, and generational and citizenship status. Language difficulty is an indicator of the degree of difficulty in communicating in English in any aspect of the respondents' lives. Cultural stress, measured by examining three survey questions (see table 1), is an indicator of stress from living in the U.S. because of its foreign customs, culture and social norms. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis shows a high internal consistency of these three questions (Cronbach's Alpha=.71). Korean identity and Korean tradition are scale variables obtained from survey questions, "How much do you identify yourself as a Korean?" and "How important is it for you to preserve Korean culture?", with the answer to each question measured on a five-point scale. U.S. Citizenship affects the level of acculturation into American society and is measured dichotomously: if he/she is a U.S. citizen, coded 1, otherwise, 0. Generational status is a dichotomous variable measured by asking the question "Which generation of Korean-Americans are you?" Respondents who in the second generation—those who were born in the U.S. with at least one parent born outside the U.S.—and in the 1.5 generation—those who were

<sup>1</sup> Estimates calculated using the Clarify program of a STATA macro provided by Tomz et al. (2001). Clarify provides predicted values of the dependent variable. Table 6 presents predicted probabilities of voluntary participation in each area of volunteering when we change the value of one explanatory variable, while holding all other explanatory variables at their mean.

**Table 2.** Probit Estimates for Decision to Volunteer

Variables	Secular Volunteering		Religious Volunteering		Informal Volunteering	
	$\beta$	Std. Error	$\beta$	Std. Error	$\beta$	Std. Error
Language Difficulty	-.178**	.074	.0367	.078	-.007	.075
Korean Identity	-.231***	.072	-.174**	.077	-.101	.072
Cultural Stress	.097	.084	-.029	.095	-.049	.091
Korean Tradition	.082	.064	.048	.068	.112*	.064
Citizenship	-.389***	.106	-.164	.112	-.113	.105
Generation	.307**	.138	.062	.148	.139	.138
Protestant	.636***	.152	1.406***	.156	.116	.148
Catholic	.886***	.195	1.156***	.197	.126	.192
Buddhist	.106	.277	.531**	.269	-.126	.270
Education	.111**	.048	.114**	.057	.053	.047
Age	.183***	.054	.066	.059	.130**	.055
Household Income	.061	.038	.001	.041	-.051	.039
Employment Status	-.282***	.104	.011	.112	.064	.105
Homeownership	-.081	.102	-.005	.111	-.091	.104
Children	.089	.114	.083	.120	-.209*	.117
Marital Status	-.042	.148	-.050	.156	-.101	.154
Gender	-.087	.105	.009	.113	-.493***	.110
Constant	-.299	.487	-.884*	.524	.354	.491
Likelihood Ratio $\chi^2$	76.22***		105.23***		39.04***	
Pseudo $R^2$	.07		.11		.04	

\*\*\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.1

born outside the U.S. and immigrated as a minor to the U.S.—are both coded 1, and those in the first generation—those who were born outside the U.S.—are coded 0. Religion is measured by three dichotomous variables: Protestant, Catholic and Buddhist. Each is coded 1 if a respondent self-identifies as Protestant, Catholic, or Buddhist, and 0 otherwise.

This research controls for the socioeconomic status of respondents. Education is included as an eight-scale nominal variable, and measure of Education includes education from Korea as well. Age is measured as an ordinal variable with six categories (see table 1). Household income is measured as a seven-scale ordinal variable. Employment status in 2008 is coded 1 if the respondent was employed full time and 0 otherwise. Homeownership is coded 1 if a respondent was a homeowner and 0 otherwise. Family structure is added by asking whether the family has any children. This family variable Children is coded 1 if the respondent has one or more children, and otherwise coded 0. We also included two dichotomous variables, Marital status, with 1 being married, and Gender, with 1 being male. A possible multicollinearity issue among independent variables has been tested by measuring Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs). The measures of VIFs for our variables are all quite moderate (the largest is 2.91). Thus, there is no evidence of serious multicollinearity in our model.

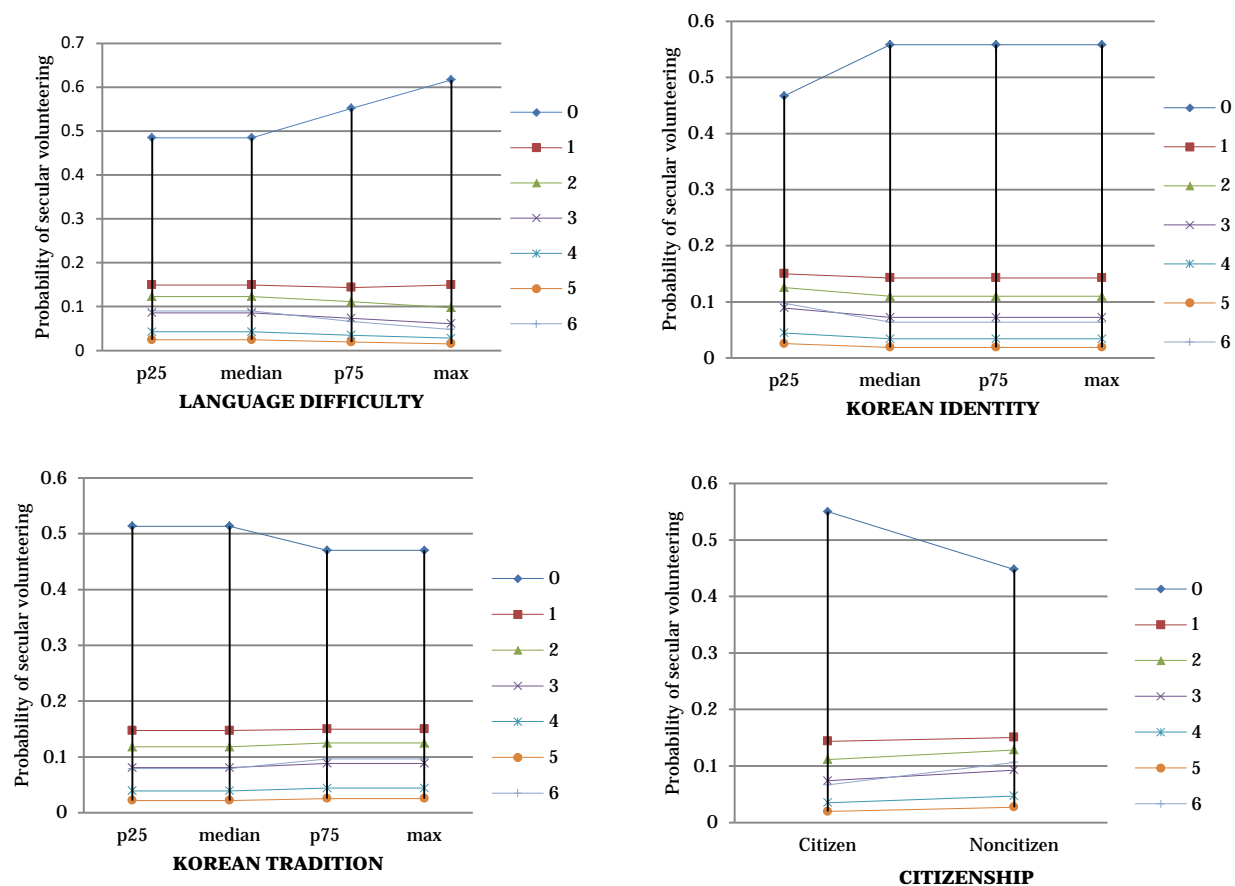
## Results

Table 2 provides the results of binary probit analyses regarding participation in volunteering activities in three philanthropic areas: secular, religious and informal. It is noteworthy that the measures of acculturation matter for participation in secular volunteering activities.

**Table 3.** Predicted Probabilities of Secular Volunteering

	Mean Probability	95% Confidence Interval	
	Language Difficulty		
1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile	.52	.48	.55
Median	.52	.48	.48
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile	.45	.39	.50
Max	.38	.28	.48
	Korean Identity		
1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile	.53	.49	.58
Median	.44	.39	.49
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile	.44	.39	.49
Max	.44	.39	.49
	Citizenship		
Yes	.43	.38	.48
No	.58	.52	.64
	Generation		
Yes	.59	.49	.68
No	.47	.43	.51
	Protestant		
Yes	.57	.52	.62
No	.32	.24	.41
	Catholic		
Yes	.77	.66	.87
No	.45	.41	.49
	Buddhist		
Yes	.53	.33	.73
No	.49	.46	.53
	Education		
1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile	.46	.41	.51
Median	.50	.47	.54
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile	.50	.47	.54
Max	.59	.50	.67
	Age		
1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile	.47	.42	.50
Median	.47	.42	.50
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile	.54	.49	.58
Max	.67	.57	.77
	Employment Status		
Full time	.46	.41	.50
No	.56	.49	.62
	Children		
Yes	.51	.461	.56
No	.47	.41	.54
	Gender		
Male	.49	.44	.53
Female	.52	.46	.58

Additionally, the estimation results reveal that religion, education, employment and age all influence Korean Americans' secular and religious volunteering. We find that difficulty in English communication (language difficulty) is negatively associated with the likelihood of secular volunteering. For relationships that are statistically significant, table 3 reports predicted

**Figure 1.** Predicted Effect of Acculturation Indicators on the Secular Volunteering

mean probabilities and their 95 % confidence intervals for engaging in secular volunteering. For example, the probability of secular volunteer participation is .38 if a respondent expresses the highest level of language difficulty, compared to .52 when a person experiences a lower level (1<sup>st</sup> quartile) of language difficulty. As predicted, Korean Americans who identify themselves strongly as Korean (Korean identity) are less likely to participate in secular and religious volunteering. The probability of secular volunteering slowly falls from .53 to .44 when Korean identity increases from its 1<sup>st</sup> quartile up to its median point. It is noteworthy that the Korean tradition indicator, which measures how important Korean tradition is to a respondent, is positively associated only with participation in informal volunteering activities, not with secular or religious formal volunteering. Moreover, the binary results indicate that a respondent who is born in the U.S. or immigrated as a minor to the U.S. presents a higher probability (.59) to volunteer for secular organizations than a person who stays in the U.S. temporarily (.47). This positive association is consistent with our acculturation hypothesis.

As expected, Protestant and Catholic Korean Americans are more likely to engage in secular volunteering, and all three religion variables (Protestant, Catholic and Buddhist) show significant positive likelihood of religious volunteering. The probability of secular volunteering rises .02 if a responder is a Protestant Christian (see table 3). Furthermore, the binary probit results suggest that most of the control variables, such as Education, Age and Income, are positively associated with voluntary participation, especially in secular nonprofits, which is consistent with our expectation. Interestingly, the negative association of Employment status

reveals that Korean Americans employed full-time are less likely to volunteer for secular philanthropy. Full-time employment reduces the probability of secular volunteering by .10 (see Table 3). Our findings also revealed that Children and Gender make a significant difference in participation only as concerns informal volunteering. We show that families with no children are more likely to help people informally, compared to families with one or more children. The negative estimate of the Gender variable suggests that female Korean Americans are more likely to volunteer for family and friends, than are male Korean Americans. The probability of informal volunteering rises if a respondent is a female (.77) rather than a male (.59).

Figure 1 shows an increase in Language difficulty from the 1st quartile (.086) to the maximum (.061) reduces the probability of secular volunteering by .025. Figure 1 also shows that Citizenship decreases the probability of volunteering in secular philanthropy by .019.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This research empirically examines the volunteer behavior of one Asian-American subgroup in the United States. The respondents of Korean-American descent were asked to complete a web-based survey with initial contact by a major Korean-American news media organization. The assumption is that the data reflects the Korean native-born and immigrant population residing in California. Despite their limitations, the data provide a comprehensive insight into the personal, social and acculturation factors of recent immigrants and native-born citizens that influence their secular, religious and informal volunteering.

The findings indicate three distinct types of volunteering behavior for Korean Americans. Formal volunteering, including secular and religious, as expected, is strongly associated with acculturation factors and with personal and social variables such as religion, education, age and employment status. Informal volunteering, on the other hand, appears to be independent of and not complementary with the other two types of volunteering. Acculturation, religion and most of the other control variables did not have an association with informal volunteering behavior. Age and a strong desire to preserve Korean traditions had a positive influence, while male and number of children negatively impacted informal ethnic volunteering. Finally, religious volunteering appeared more similar to secular volunteering, with the socio-demographic factors of religiosity and education being significant predictors for both.

In regards to secular volunteering, the significant association of acculturation, as the process by which individuals change in adapting to demands of a new environment, suggests implications for nonprofit organizations seeking ethnic participation (Berry, 1997). Lack of English-language proficiency and strong identification with Korean culture result in less secular volunteering. Programs of language education, continuing adult education, and religion-related instruction may encourage immigrants to become engaged in community-based programming, increase their social-capital resources, and enhance their likelihood to volunteer. Surprisingly, citizenship lessens the likelihood of secular volunteering. This might be due to recent anxiety related to illegal immigration and the desire of some individuals, despite becoming citizens, to volunteer less for formal secular organizations. Sundeen et al. (2007) found that citizenship produced different results on volunteering among three Asian subgroups. Chinese Americans who were naturalized citizens were less likely to volunteer than non-citizens. An alternate explanation might be the bi-dimensional acculturation strategies reported by Lee, Sobal, and Frongillo (2003). They found that separate or marginalized Korean Americans contrasted with more assimilated Korean Americans, who tend to be younger, married, more educated and integrated, and more likely to volunteer. Those with citizenship might be in the marginalized

group who have lived long enough in the United States to obtain citizenship but maintain their cultural heritage and have not yet sought to become involved in the greater community. More research is needed on the impact of citizenship and to further explore the bi-dimensional acculturation model for Korean Americans.

A determinant of formal volunteering for Korean Americans is participation in religious institutions, which supports the finding for Asian Americans by Ecklund and Park (2005). Accordingly, religiosity is the factor associated with religious volunteering for Korean Americans. Of interest, is the limited association of acculturation variables impacting religious volunteering. Korean identity is a statistically significant factor negatively associated with religious volunteering. A large percentage of Korean Americans are Protestant (Smith et al., 1999), which may explain why acculturation has very little association with religious volunteering for this Asian-American group. Still, the literature is ambiguous concerning the impact of diverse eastern religion faiths, including Catholicism and Protestantism on the Asian-American immigrant's volunteering behavior for formal secular organizations (Sundeen et al., 2007). More research is required on the relationship between secular and religious volunteering for Korean and other Asian-American groups. In particular, will Korean Americans who attend a Protestant church in an ethnic neighborhood with other similar immigrants, increase their social capital and networking, which support greater formal volunteering, or will such attendance increase cultural capital, thereby supporting the isolation of specific ethnic values and desires and resulting in less volunteering to formal organizations? Since churches play an important role in the adjustment of ethnic and immigrant groups into mainstream society, a better understanding of the underlying foundations of volunteering for religious and secular organizations by ethnic and immigrant groups is essential.

This research examined the informal helping behavior that is important to fully understanding the conceptual framework of volunteering for the mainstream population (Wilson & Musick, 1997) and uniquely critical for ethnic and immigrant subgroups (Sundeen et al., 2007, 2009). Variables such as religion and education were found to be significantly associated with secular and religious volunteering, but not with helping friends, family, and community members. Significantly associated with informal volunteering was age (obligations increased with age, peaking with children and extended-family obligations), children (children at home decreased the likelihood of helping others informally), gender (women in particular helping, nurturing and providing care to hold the family together increased informal volunteering, as contrasted to men). Acculturation variables (particularly language difficulty, Korean identity, citizenship, and generational status) were significantly associated with formal volunteering and to a lesser extent religious volunteering; these variables were not associated with informal volunteering. Surprisingly, the Korean tradition was the only acculturation variable that increased the likelihood of helping family and friends. This independent and unrelated behavior for informal volunteering, as compared to formal acts of philanthropy, calls for additional examination of Korean Americans' and Asian Americans' volunteering practices.

### **Disclosure Statement**

The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

## References

- Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (2013). *New findings: 78% Korean Americans voted for Obama; Many faced barriers at the polls*. Retrieved from <http://aaldef.org/press-releases/press-release/new-findings-78-korean-americans-voted-for-obama-many-faced-barriers-at-the-polls.html>
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaption. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46, 5-68. doi:10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x
- Carson, E. D. (1999). On defining and measuring volunteering in the United States and abroad. *Law & Contemporary Problems*, 62, 67-71. doi:10.2307/1192267
- Chao, J. (2001). Asian American philanthropy: Acculturation and charitable vehicle. In P. C. Rogers (Ed.), *Philanthropy in communities of color: Traditions and challenges* (pp. 57-79). Indianapolis, IN: Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action.
- Cnaan, R. A., Kasternakis, A., & Wineburg, R. J. (1993). Religious people, religious congregations, and volunteerism in human services: Is there a link? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 22, 33-51. doi:10.1177/089976409302200104
- Crissey, S. R. (2009). *Educational attainment in the United States: 2007* (Report No. P20-560). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Ecklund, E. H. & Park, J. Z. (2005). Asian American community participation and religion: Civic model minorities? *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 8, 1-21. doi:10.1353/jaas.2005.0027
- Fletcher, F., Campbell, B., & Fast, J. (2007). *Immigrant women as volunteers: Benefits for charitable and nonprofit organizations*. Ottawa, Canada: Knowledge Development Centre, Imagine Canada.
- Freeman, R. B. (1997). Working for nothing: The supply of volunteer labor. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 15, S140-S166. doi:10.1086/209859
- Gaskin, K. & Smith, J. D. (1997). *A new civic Europe? A study of the extent and role of volunteering*. London, England: National Center for Volunteering.
- Grieco, E. M. & Trvelyan, E. N. (2010). *Place of birth of the foreign-born population: 2009* (Report No. ACSBR/09-15). Washington, DC: U. S. Census Bureau.
- Handy, F. & Greenspan, I. (2009). Immigrant volunteering: A stepping stone to integration? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38, 956-982. doi:10.1177/0899764008324455
- Johnson Center for Philanthropy . (2009). *Charitable Giving and Volunteering among Korean Americans Survey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Grand Valley State University.
- Kurien, P. (2002). We are better Hindus here: Religion and ethnicity among Indian American. In P. G. Min & J. H. Kim (Eds.), *Religions in Asian America: Building faith communities* (pp. 99-102). Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- Lee, S. K., Sobal, J., & Frongillo, E. A. (2003). Comparison of models of acculturation: The case of Korean Americans. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 34, 282-296. doi:10.1177/0022022103034003003
- Lee, Y. J. & Moon, S. G. (2011). Mainstream and ethnic volunteering by Korean immigrants in the United States. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 22, 811-830. doi:10.1007/s11266-010-9176-y
- Markham, W. T. & Bonjean, C. M. (1996). Employment status and the attitudes and behavior of higher status women volunteers 1975 and 1992. *Sex Roles*, 34 (9), 695-717. doi:10.1007/BF01551503
- Musick, M., Wilson, J., & Bynum, W. B. (2000). Race and formal volunteering: The differential effects of class and religion. *Social Forces*, 78, 1539-1571. doi:10.1093/sf/78.4.1539

- The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2012). *Asian Americans: A mosaic of faiths*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- Portes, A. & Sensenbrenner, J. (1993). Embeddedness and immigration: Notes on the social determinants of economic action. *American Journal of Sociology*, 98, 1320-1350. doi:10.1086/230191
- Rotolo, T., Wilson, J., & Hughes, M. E. (2010). Homeownership and volunteering: An alternative approach to studying social inequality and civic engagement. *Sociological Forum*, 25, 570-587. doi:10.1111/j.1573-7861.2010.01196.x
- Smith, B., Shue, S., Vest, L. J., & Villarreal, J. (1994). *Ethnic philanthropy: Sharing and giving money, goods, and services in the African American, Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Guatemalan, and Salvadorian communities of the San Francisco Bay area*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management.
- Smith, B., Shue, S., Vest, L. J., & Villarreal, J. (1999). *Philanthropy in communities of color*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Smith, B., Shue, S., & Villarreal, J. (1992). *Asian and Hispanic philanthropy*. San Francisco, CA: Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management.
- Smith, D. H. (1983). Synanthrometrics: On progress in the development of a general theory of voluntary action and citizen participation. In D. H. Smith & J. V. Til (Eds.), *International perspectives on voluntary action research* (pp. 80-97). Washington, DC: University Press of America.
- Smith, D. H. (1994). Determinants of voluntary association participation and volunteering: A literature review. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 23, 243-263. doi:10.1177/089976409402300305
- Sundeen, R. A. (1990). Citizens serving government: The extent and distinctiveness of volunteer participation in local public agencies. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 19, 329-344. doi:10.1177/089976409001900404
- Sundeen, R. A., Garcia, C., & Raskoff, S. A. (2009). Ethnicity, acculturation, and volunteering to organizations: A comparison of African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and Whites. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38, 929-955. doi:10.1177/0899764008322779
- Sundeen, R. A., Garcia, C., & Wang, L. (2007). Volunteer behavior among Asian American groups in the United States. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 10, 243-281. doi:10.1353/jaas.2007.0031
- Tomz, M., Wittenberg, J., & King, G. (2001). *Clarify: Software for interpreting and presenting statistical results*. Retrieved from <http://gking.harvard.edu>
- Tucker, C. M. & Santiago, A. M. (2013). The role of acculturation in the civic engagement of Latino immigrants. *Advances in Social Work*, 14(1), 178-205.
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Census 2000, Summary File 1 Table QT-P3: Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin 2000*. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/main.html>
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Census 2010, Summary File 1 Table QT-P3: Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin 2010*. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/main.html>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). *Current population survey, annual social and economic supplement, 2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2010/tables.html>
- Wang, L. (2011). Understanding how philanthropy and nonprofit activities manifest in minority communities in the United States. In K. A. Agard (Ed.), *Leadership in nonprofit organizations: A reference handbook* (pp. 258-266). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication. doi:10.4135/9781412979320.n30
- Wang, L. & Handy, F. (2013). Religious and secular voluntary participation by immigrants in Canada: How trust and social networks affect decision to participate. *Voluntas*:



- International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 25, 1559-1582. doi:10.1007/s11266-013-9428-8.
- Wang, L., Yoshioka, C. F., & Ashcraft, R. F. (2013). What affects Hispanic volunteering in the United States: Comparing the current population survey, panel study of income dynamics, and the AIM giving and volunteering survey. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 24, 125-148. doi:10.1007/s11266-012-9325-6
- Wilson, J. (2000). Volunteering. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 215-240. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1215
- Wilson, J. & Janoski, T. (1995). The contribution of religion to volunteer work. *Sociology of Religion*, 56, 137-152. doi:10.2307/3711760
- Wilson, J. & Musick, M. (1997). Who cares? Toward an integrated theory of volunteer work. *American Sociological Review*, 62, 694-713. doi:10.2307/2657355
- Zane, N. & Mak, W. (2003). Major approaches to the measurement of acculturation among ethnic minority populations: A content analysis and an alternative empirical strategy. In K. M. Chun, P. B. Organista, & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research* (pp. 39-60). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. doi:10.1037/10472-005
- Zhou, M. & Kim, S. S. (2006). Community forces, social capital, and educational achievement: The case of supplementary education in the Chinese and Korean immigrant communities. *Harvard Education Review*, 76, 1-29. doi:10.17763/haer.76.1.u08t548554882477

### **Author Biographies**

**Hee Soun Jang** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Administration at University of North Texas. Her research and teaching interests are in nonprofit management and organization, urban policy making, and local government service delivery and contracts.

**Lili Wang** is an Associate Professor in the School of Community Resources and Development at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on charitable behavior, institutional philanthropy, and collaborative governance.

**Carlton F. Yoshioka** is a Professor in the School of Community Resources and Development at Arizona State University. His research interests are management and leadership of nonprofit organizations, methodological issues of giving and volunteering, and volunteering behavior.