

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: EXPLORATION OF COMMUNICATIVE  
SOCIAL CAPITAL, CIVIC AND POLITICAL  
ENGAGEMENT OF THE KOREAN  
DIASPORA

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The purpose of this study was to examine qualitatively how members of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area make meaning of ethnic community, social capital, and civic and political engagement. More specifically, the study examined how communicative social capital influences civic and political engagement as well as other factors that influence or inhibit civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora. Previous communication scholarship has under-examined social capital of ethnically diverse publics in relation to these aspects.

Literature regarding the diaspora, ethnic identity, social capital, and civic and political engagement contributed to this study. From the literature, four research questions were posed: How do members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of the Korean community? How do members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of social capital and create opportunities for social capital? How do members of the

Korean diaspora make meaning of civic and political engagement? and, How does social capital influence civic and political engagement? To best illustrate and describe how members of the Korean diaspora experience the phenomena of the diasporic community, social capital, and civic and political engagement, I chose a qualitative research method, which utilized 42 in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with members of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area, guided by an interview protocol. I utilized a grounded theory approach to data analysis. From the data, several themes arose regarding ethnic community, social capital and civic and political engagement.

Results suggested that members of the Korean diaspora made meaning of ethnic community in relation to ethnic identity, and there were varying perceptions of the Korean community, drawbacks as well as reasons to keep the community, which varied depending on the generations. Social capital was found to be plentiful in the churches, but not so much in the community at large, and church capital was not equally available or accessible to all members. Some participants were more concerned about social capital, hoping to contribute or give back to the community rather than receiving the community social capital. Results suggested that weak consciousness and lack of ownership, language and cultural barrier, lack of resources and motivation discourage civic engagement while church activities and parental status encourages civic engagement. In terms of the political engagement, misunderstanding and the operationalization of the term political engagement, lack of strong ownership, misperception on politics across generations, gender, language and cultural barrier as well as the tension between church and politics discouraged

members of the Korean diaspora from engaging in political activities. Results also suggested that religious social capital and community social capital have a strong influence on civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora.

The data extend our understanding of ethnic community, communicative social capital and civic and political engagement. Evidence suggests that ethnic community, social capital, and civic and political engagement intersect in the meaning-making of the members of the Korean diaspora and that future research must focus on examining these aspects to better understand communicative social capital to empower ethnic communities and strengthen democracy.

EXPLORATION OF COMMUNICATIVE SOCIAL CAPITAL, CIVIC AND  
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF THE KOREAN DIASPORA

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## **Dedication**

‘Love the Lord your God with  
all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ Matthew 22:37

This dissertation marks end of a long journey and I dedicate this work to my King, my Savior, Christ Jesus. You shaped me and molded me for 7 years in Maryland so I could learn to love and worship you the way I was created to be. I also dedicate this work to my family, especially to my mom and dad who waited so patiently and gave their unending support and love.

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I would also like to thank members of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area who participated in this research, volunteered their time and shared their experiences with me.

There are so many people who stood by me and offered their friendship throughout my years in Maryland. I would also like to thank members of the Korean Bible Study, New Hope Church, Good Community Church of Torrance, as well as the members of the Center for Business As Mission who helped me grow spiritually during my PhD program.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Civic engagement in American society is in decline (Putnam, 1995; 2000). As Americans are joining associations less, social interaction that creates opportunities for civic engagement is also in decline. This is because during social interaction, individuals engage in conversations that open opportunities to become involved in civic and political activities (Putnam, 1995; 2000). More specifically, scholars have found that resources, recruitment, and psychological orientation affect people's civic and political engagement (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Social interactions through associations also facilitate trust and cooperation, which further encourage members to become more active as civic citizens. Therefore, social interactions contribute to strong democracy. Clearly, the decrease in civic engagement is an important matter, especially given the increasing growth of new ethnic groups.

The new generation of Americans is expected to consist of ethnic minorities. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by the year 2050, ethnic minorities are projected to reach 171 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Latinos alone are projected to be one fourth of the entire population by year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). These estimations indicate an obvious need to understand civic and political engagement of ethnic minorities. Particularly, there are only a handful of studies that have examined civic and political engagement of Asian Americans (Aptekar, 2009; Wong, 2006). The majority of studies on civic and political engagement have centered on Anglo-whites (Verba et al., 1995). More studies are examining African Americans and Latinos as their numbers are increasing (Brown & Brown, 2003; Stokes-Brown, 2009); however, studies on civic and political engagement of Asian Americans, specifically on Koreans, have

been limited, despite the fact that Koreans are the fourth largest Asian minority in the United States. Also, the handful of studies on the civic and political engagement of Koreans have shown findings that are very different from other ethnic groups (e.g., Cherry, 2009; Ecklund, 2005a, 2005b, 2007; Ecklund & Park, 2005; Mo, 2000), calling for more in-depth analysis of Koreans' civic and political activities.

Studies on social capital show that organizations facilitate a number of tangible and intangible sources to their members (Burt, 2000; Coleman, 1990; Fulk et al., 2005; Granovetter, 1978; Lin, 2001; Putnam, 1993; Yuan et al., 2007). Here, organizations might be as small as a nuclear family or as large as a community with thousands of members. The degree of member activity, number of members, and the strength of relationships between members could all determine how much social capital is available to members. Ethnic communities, or ethnic social enclaves, have varying degrees of social capital, as they tend to be more cohesive when members have more commonalities (such as language, culture, values and religion) (McPherson et al., 2001). Korean communities have been found to be cohesive and homogeneous compared to other ethnic communities. Moreover, there are a plethora of factors that contribute to the degree of social capital held by members, including religion, human, intellectual, and market capital (Choi, 2005; Givens, 1939; Hurh & Kim, 1990; Jang & Kim, forthcoming; Min & Bozorgmehr, 2000; Valdez, 2008).

Studies have shown that social capital is related to civic and political engagement (Ramakrishnan & Bloemraad, 2008; Rojas et al., 2011). Specifically, religious capital has been found to have direct influence on civic and political engagement for ethnic minorities (Camarota, 2001; Gimpel, 1999; Hoffman & Appiah, 2006). In African-

American and Muslim communities, the level of involvement was found to have a strong positive influence on civic and political involvement (Hoffman & Appiah, 2006).

However, even though studies have shown that 60-70% of Koreans living in America are church-attendees (Min & Bozorgmehr, 2000), Koreans' civic and political engagement has been relatively low (Ecklund, 2007). This shows that while Koreans have plenty of resources and opportunities for civic and political engagement, they have not been led to engage in civic and political activities like other ethnic groups. Current studies do not explain the cause of this phenomenon.

While Koreans have been living in the United States for over 100 years, their civic and political behaviors show that they have not fully assimilated into the society as civic citizens despite their socioeconomic success. As Koreans have been found to indirectly contribute to the weakening of American democracy, there is a need to investigate how Koreans make meaning of social capital and Korean communities, as these two factors bring opportunities that facilitate civic and political engagement. Moreover, there is a need to investigate how Koreans use social capital in their civic and political engagement to better understand which factors encourage or inhibit active engagement.

In light of the aforementioned information, the purpose of this study is to explore how Koreans use whichever forms of social capital are available to them in their civic and political engagement. This study will explore in depth how Koreans living in America make meaning of their ethnic communities and social capital, and how their views of community and use of social capital influence their civic and political engagement. Exploring these questions can contribute to larger scholarship that includes

Korean social enclaves, social capital as well as the civic and political engagement of ethnic minorities. Additionally, findings from this research may be used to understand other ethnic groups whose communities share similarities with Korean behavior.

This study will contribute to the theory development for social capital in the communication discipline as applied to ethnic groups. The findings of the study will also contribute to the body of literature on ethnic and racial studies, more specifically, on how ethnically diverse publics make meaning of their ethnic communities and community social capital. Moreover, the study will contribute to the literature on civic and political engagement of ethnic minorities. Despite the importance of the research areas, there is no theory to explain use of social capital in civic and political engagement of ethnically diverse groups. As the study of social capital and civic and political engagement in relation to ethnic minorities is relatively novel in the field of communication, several bodies of literature from other disciplines are borrowed for this study, including government and politics, ethnic studies, and sociology. This study will employ a qualitative research approach and use in-depth interviewing as a method to collect data.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### Diaspora

The term Diaspora has been used to illustrate and define the unique experiences of the Jews (Sheffer, 2003), that is, the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine. The term Diaspora in ancient Greek means “the scattered” (Liddell, 2011), and in today’s society, the term is used to not only refer to the Jewish experiences but also to describe other ethnic and cultural groups that have migrated from an established or ancestral homeland (Brubaker, 2005).

However, while the Jewish experience should be recognized in the discussion of the term Diaspora, their history does not create a definitive model (Clifford, 1994). Clifford further suggested that “Jewish diasporas can be taken as non-normative starting points for a discourse that is travelling or hybridizing in new global conditions” (1994, p. 306). In response to this call, in recent studies, various terms or categories have been formed to embrace various groups with historical backgrounds different from that of Jews. First, characterized as long-distance nationalists (Anderson, 1998), Albanians, Hindu Indians, Irish, Kashmiri, Kurds, Palestinians, Tamils and others have been identified as belonging to this group because of their involvement in homeland politics (Bhatt & Mukta, 2000; Sheffer, 1986, 2003). Another group has been identified as labor migrants, including but not limited to Algerian, Bangladeshi, Filipino, Greek, Haitian, Indian, Italian, Korean, Mexican, Pakistani, Puerto Rican, Polish, Salvadoran, Turkish, and Vietnamese, given their emotional and social ties to their homeland (Sheffer, 2003).

Because the definition of Diaspora has been expanded to embrace a number of different ethnic and cultural groups, recent scholars have criticized its elasticity by

suggesting that “if everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so” (Brubaker, 2005). Brubaker further argues that such use of the term could potentially lose its discriminating power. Such criticism is legitimate, especially when a group has been well assimilated into the mainstream, such as the Italian Diaspora.

Therefore, in order to clearly define the term and to distinguish a diasporic group, the following criteria could be applied: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary-maintenance (Brubaker, 2005). First, *dispersion* could be interpreted as a forced or otherwise traumatic dispersion in a strict sense, or, in broader sense, as any kind of dispersion in space (Brubaker, 2005; Safran, 1991). The second criterion, *homeland orientation*, refers to the “orientation to a real or imagined homeland as an authoritative source of value, identity and loyalty” (Brubaker, p. 5). Therefore, this orientation includes maintaining collective memory or myth about the homeland, regarding the ancestral homeland as the place to eventually return to, and being committed to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland for its safety and prosperity (Safran, 1991). The third criterion is *boundary maintenance*, which involves the preservation of a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society (Brubaker, p. 6). This boundary could be “maintained by deliberate resistance to assimilation through self-enforced endogamy or other forms of self-segregation (Armstrong, 1976, p. 394-5, Smith, 1986) or as an unintended consequence of social exclusion (Laitin, 1995). These three criteria set diasporic groups apart from non-diasporic groups.

However, despite expected clarity in making the distinction, recent studies still show ambiguity in using the term, because of the recent studies focusing on hybridity, fluidity, creolization, and syncretism (Brubaker, 2005). Hall (1990) suggested that the



“diaspora experience is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity” (Hall, 1990, p. 235). Therefore, in diaspora literature, there is a tension between “boundary-maintenance and boundary-erosion” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 6).

This tension between the boundary-maintenance and boundary-erosion occurs over time during the process of assimilation and also becomes salient between generations (Alba & Nee, 1997, 2003; Brubaker, 2001). As the second, third, and fourth generations assimilate into a mainstream culture, thereby losing their orientation toward the homeland, their diasporic identity may be challenged, creating boundary erosion. Therefore, it is important to examine the tension between the boundary maintenance and boundary erosion, more specifically, the issue of identities and community, as these issues are the center of the tension in the diaspora literature (Brubaker, 2005).

### **Cultural identity and ethnic community**

Cultural identity has been a ubiquitous concept in intercultural communication and across a number of social science disciplines. Hence, it has also been defined in a number of ways. De Vos (1990) has defined cultural identity as what gives “a sense of common origin, as well as common beliefs and values, or common values” and what serves as “self-defining in-groups” (p. 204). According to Yinger (1986) cultural identity offers “a sense of historical continuity and embeddedness and a larger existence in a collectivity of one’s group” (p. 21). Kim (2007) further suggested cultural identity designates “both a sociological or demographic classification, as well as an individual’s psychological identification with a particular group” (p. Kim, 2007, p. 238). As such,

common origin, beliefs and values enable individuals to define themselves within a larger collectivity; although it could lead to simply categorization based on sociological or demographic information.

Examination of cultural identity has been important in social science disciplines, as adaptation of immigrants and other cultural minorities has been viewed as an important and desired goal for a society (Kim, 2007). Studies examining Japanese immigrants (Masuda et al., 1970) and Hispanics in America (Suro, 1998; Triandis et al., 1986) have found that cultural identity changes and evolves over time as immigrants assimilate into the host culture. Moreover, Kim (2007) suggested that cultural identity does not remain static due to stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, which is the internal conflict between “one’s loyalty to the original identity and a necessity to embrace a new one.” Because of this quality, scholars suggested that cultural identity is dynamic, flexible and negotiable (Hecht et al., 2005; Kim, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 1993, 2005).

Sha (2006) pointed out that the terms race and ethnicity often are used politically, rather than objectively, and their connotations often are evaluative rather than descriptive (Sha, 2006). Hence, Sha (2006), Hecht and colleagues' (1993) conceptualization of identity included two dimensions: *avowed identity*, being internally defined and *ascribed identity*, being externally imposed. Whether first-generation immigrants or native-born ethnic minorities have to negotiate their identification with their ethnic group and their identification with the mainstream culture of the society due to their minority status (Gong, 2007).

Identity construction is timely in youth (Kroger 2004, p. 7), as it is when identity negotiation is often very much in process (Helve, 2002, p. 222). Scholars find that ethnic

identity formation is ongoing, continuous and sometimes it extends throughout the individual's lifetime, during which there could be more exploration, revision and remaking of the individual's identity (Grotevant 1987; Parham, 1989; Yip et al. 2006).

One of the factors that influence cultural identity is ethnic community. Although communities are constructed spatially, in terms of locality, for the ethnically diverse groups, communities are defined in terms of ethnic and racial origins (Blunkett, 2002, p. 1-3). Uba (1994) found that Asian American children develop their ethnic identity within a context of Asian family values and traditions that place great emphasis on family duty, obligation, solidarity, respect and commitment. Further, Lu suggests that Chinese parents have encouraged preservation of their culture and language by sending their children to the Chinese schools (p. 215), and these ethnic enclaves have been found to provide opportunities for more identity exploration (Phinney et al. 2001). Vo-Jutabha et al. (2009) found that Vietnamese youths who were attached to their ethnic communities had more opportunities to construct their ethnic identities than the youths who were not attached to the Vietnamese community.

Another factor that influences ethnic identity construction for youths is kinship ties. For instance, Reynolds found that for Caribbean youths, their familial and cultural connections to the Caribbean country of origin often superseded their places of birth in defining their ethnic identities (2006, p. 1095). As Caribbean youths maintain strong ethnic identification through tight-knit relationships with their families and friends (Goulbourne, 2002) Caribbean young people in the United Kingdom have a sense of belonging to globally dispersed, transnational, family networks (Fog-Olwig, 2002; Reynolds, 2006; Sutton, 2004).

Studies found that identity is also related to religion (Heimbrock, 2001; Modood, 2005). Here, religious identification is the individuals' identification as members of particular religious groups (Greenfield & Marks, 2007, p. 247). Kuusisto's (2010) study showed that Finnish youths with Seventh-day Adventist religious identification were found to negotiate their identities in relation to their religion. However, there are limited studies on the intersection of ethnic identity, ethnic community, and religion (Modood, 2005) and more research is needed to better understand how religious identification influences one's ethnic identity, for instance, for the members of the Korean diaspora.

### **The Korean Diaspora in the United States**

As of 2009, there are roughly seven million Koreans living in foreign countries and roughly two million have immigrated to the United States (Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade). While it has been more than one hundred years since the first wave of Koreans settled in the United States, Koreans have firmly grounded themselves in the United States, yet have still maintained their emotional and social ties to their homeland by staying in contact with relatives and friends, and have also preserved their unique culture within the social enclaves they have created. Applying the three criteria mentioned above, Koreans in the United States could be defined as a diasporic group.

Due to political reasons, many Koreans were uprooted from Korea and sent to Russia, Japan and China during the early 1900s (Chong, 2006; Lee et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2007; Petrov, 2008; Yang et al., 2011; Yoo, 2012). While these Korean diasporic groups also maintained their cultural practices and established ethnic enclaves in various cities in Russia, Japan and China, because of different reasons for migration (i.e., forced versus voluntary immigrations) and limited studies on Korean communities on Korean diasporas

in those places, this study does not compare the Korean diaspora in America with Korean diasporas in other countries.

### **Three waves of the Korean Diaspora**

The first group of Koreans who came to America was an envoy of Chosun (the name for Korea prior to her declaration as a democratic nation). Ten persons came to the United States in 1883 to seek moral support from America as Korea was under the heavy political influence of China and Japan (KAFGW, 2009, p. 2). The second envoy came in 1887. Then, Chosun was able to send eight diplomats to the United States to strengthen relations with the United States. However, as Chosun became politically weak, the legation in the United States was forced by Japan to close in 1905 (KAFGW, 2009). The Chosun legation stayed in Washington, DC, for eighteen years, with five ministers and eight acting ministers serving as diplomats until it was officially closed in December 1905 (KAFGW, 2009).

Between the years of the Japanese annexation of Korea, many political leaders were exiled and many voluntarily fled because of the political turmoil. Of those who came to America, most settled in the Washington, DC, area to persuade the President of the United States and Congress to support Korea's independence. Hence, the nation's capital became the center of the Korean independence movement. A number of key players, including Syngman Rhee (who became the first president of Korea), Chang Ho Ahn, and Yong Man Park, contributed to the independence of Korea from Japanese annexation, and they stayed in the Washington, DC, area from the early 1900s to the mid-1940s (KAFGW, 2009).

Unlike the elite who settled in the Washington area, the second group of Koreans who came to America was laborers. From 1903 to 1905, 7,226 Koreans (mostly men) came to America and settled in Hawaii. Because most of these men were unmarried and could not find brides in the United States, a large number of picture brides came from Korea about a decade later. These women were considerably younger and more educated than their husbands; therefore, after a few years in Hawaii, many moved to other states for their children's education (KAFGW, 2009).

The second wave of Koreans came in the years surrounding Korea's independence (1945) and the Korean War (1951). According to Immigration and Naturalization Services, 37,063 Korean women came as wives of American service men, and 6,293 orphans came as adoptees. As the war brought deaths to the Korean peninsula, many Korean citizens became homeless and parentless overnight. Orphans and even those whose parents were alive but unable to support them were adopted by families in the United States. The number continued to grow as students and doctors also immigrated in great numbers. By 1970, over ten thousand Koreans had immigrated to the United States.

The third wave of Koreans came in the 1970s, and varied in terms of social economic status, ranging from international students, politicians, and businessmen. Clearly, Koreans immigrated for different purposes. However, different from the Hawaii laborers and brides of the American servicemen, the third wave consisted of Koreans who were in relatively higher socioeconomic standing. However, despite their initial plans, because of the language barriers, many Koreans had to settle for jobs that they were overqualified for, thereby suffering hardships and disappointments (Im, 2008, p. 30).

Despite their sense of loss of their social status, many remained in the United States to live their American dream.

As such, members of the Korean diaspora came to America at different times for different reasons. Therefore, this study uses the term Korean diaspora to include different generations of Koreans (1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> etc.), those who married outside of their racial and ethnic groups, as well as Korean adoptees. While the term diaspora is used to refer to diasporic groups that embody the three characteristics (e.g., homeland orientation, boundary maintenance), as Korean diaspora still maintain those characteristics due to short history of immigration in America, the term diaspora is used to refer to all generations of members of the Korean diaspora.

### **Formation of Korean communities**

Since the first group of Korean students settled in the Washington, DC, area, Koreans set up Korean associations. The first Korean social gathering was established in December 1950 with just nine members, the purpose being to “promote friendship among Koreans, welfare of Koreans and friendship with people of friendly nations” (KAFGW, 2009, p. 17). This group later changed its official name from Korean Social Group to Koreans Association of the Greater Washington Area. Koreans gathered and enjoyed various social activities together. These meetings functioned as opportunities to catch up on the latest news and network with other Koreans.

Other groups soon followed. The Washington Korean Student Association was founded in 1955, the Korean American Women’s Association (later changed to Organization of Korean American Women) in 1963, the Korean American Women’s Society of Greater Washington in 1982, and the Korean American Scholarship

Foundation in 1968. The first church in the Washington area, the Washington Korean Methodist Church, was founded in 1951 with thirty-two members, and the second was established in 1955 (KAFGW, 2009).

### **Korean communities in America**

As the number of Koreans grew exponentially, larger hubs, churches, and associations mushroomed. Grocery stores and other facilities were established, providing physical locations for Koreans to have official gatherings and be affiliated with organizations of their choices. Especially, as the third wave of Koreans settled in large metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles and New York, these cities naturally became the cultural and social hubs of Koreans living in near proximity. These Korean communities or social enclaves played a critical role in providing the needs of Koreans in America. Also, Korean communities functioned as a starting point for newly immigrated Koreans and Korean international students to receive help and gather information.

The number of Koreans in each city does not indicate Koreans' place of residency; rather, the numbers represent the number of Koreans registered under each Korean embassy across North America [11 total]. Koreans have predominantly settled in these eleven locations. It is difficult to gather statistics on the number of Koreans residing in and/or around Korean social enclaves because many are dispersed even within the region and also because Korean social enclaves themselves are dispersed. For instance, Korean churches are scattered in terms of their locations because of high rent in the inner-cities or for other reasons. Also, as Koreans gain upward social mobility, some move to different parts of the cities, and Korean stores and restaurants have similarly become scattered around cities rather than aggregating in a particular location. For example,



Chicago no longer has a clearly demarcated Korea town, rather Korean businesses are scattered throughout the suburban areas. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the size of Korean communities or clearly distinguish their boundaries for reporting purposes.

**Table 1. Korean population in America**

	Population (2009)	Percentage (out of 100%)
Los Angeles	518,300	22.29%
New York City	380,100	16.34%
Chicago	239,600	10.30%
San Francisco	178,560	7.68%
Seattle	172,167	7.40%
Huston	159,400	6.85%
Atlanta	189,000	8.13%
Boston	29,252	1.26%
Honolulu	44,589	1.92%
Hagatna, Guam	7,116	.31%
Washington, DC	177,803	7.64 %
Total in the U.S.	2,325,605	90.40%
Canada	223,322	9.60%

Embassy of the Republic of Korea in USA (2011)

The Korean community grew around the 1980s and these communities offer convenient facilities including but not limited to Korean grocery stores, bookstores, restaurants, hair salons, cleaners, dentists and many others in order to help Koreans carry out their daily lives (Choi, 2005; Lee, 1993; Min & Bozorgmehr, 2000; Yoo, 1998). Also, Korean communities assist older Koreans by providing them with financial, emotional, and language assistance as well as advice on health-related issues (Wong, Yoo, & Stewart, 2005). As such, there are a plethora of services that cater to Koreans living in America.

Previous research on diaspora, the Korean diaspora and the Korean communities illustrate a unique way in which Koreans have preserved their culture, language and ways of doing things within their community. However, there is lack of in-depth examination

of the ways in which the members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of their ethnic community and how the meaning-making may be different across generations. Therefore, based on the preceding review of the literature related to the Korean diaspora and the Korean community, the following research question is asked:

RQ1: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of their ethnic community?

### **How Social Capital originated**

When Tocqueville visited America in the 1930s, he was impressed by how much Americans were involved in various associations ranging from local community associations to political associations. As a sociopolitical scholar, Tocqueville saw citizens' active involvement in associations as one of the primary reasons that contributed to the strengthening of democracy in the United States. In other words, when citizens were active participants in civic life, for reasons including but not limited to personal responsibility or duty as citizens, a nation had more potential to grow stronger (Tocqueville, 1930).

In his famous work, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," Putnam (1995) explained that the social capital of Americans in terms of civic engagement has significantly declined in recent years. Putnam compared data regarding civic engagement collected in 1980 with that of data collected in 1993, finding that there has been massive decline in all forms of civic interactions, primarily in church-related groups, labor unions, fraternal and veteran's organizations, as well as school-service groups (e.g., PTAs). However, not all social interactions had declined. While some experienced massive decline, others—such as membership in professional associations and women's organizations—have increased. For instance, in his analysis of bowlers,

Putnam found that while the overall number of bowlers increased over a decade, the number of bowling leagues actually decreased significantly (Putnam, 1995). This shows that activities such as bowling have been increasing because more and more people are bowling alone rather than engaging in social interaction with others.

Putnam's central argument is that this decrease of social interactions leads to decreased opportunities for civic conversations. According to Putnam, interacting with others prompts individuals to engage in other activities that had been previously uninteresting or unknown to them. Thus, social interactions naturally generate opportunities for individuals to become engaged in civic activities (1995). Associations such as bowling leagues, as mentioned above, have been that platform for Americans.

Putnam provided several explanations for this decrease in social interaction. Multiple social changes, for example, have occurred in recent years that have inhibited individuals from engaging in civic conversations. These changes include the growing number of nuclear families; the overall mobility of American families that has created a loss of ties that bind individuals to their communities and neighborhoods; a general demographic transformation that includes fewer marriages, more divorces, and fewer children; a larger female workforce spurred on by both financial necessity as well as professional upward mobility; and the privatization of leisure activities, including the development of technology that has inhibited active, face-to-face interaction with other individuals (2000). These social changes have both directly and indirectly impacted the decline of social interaction in America (Putnam, 1995; 2000). These social interactions, Putnam urged, are the fabric of our society.

Other studies have also shown that the fabric of American society is becoming weaker. McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears (2006) found that the size of core discussion networks of Americans has significantly decreased over the last two decades. In their 2006 study, which is a replicate of Marsden's 1987 study of American's core discussion networks, McPherson and colleagues found that the average number of confidants Americans have had dropped from three persons to two persons since 1986. Moreover, Marsden's findings showed that Americans have kin-centered networks that are dense and homogenous in terms of race, ethnicity, and education (1987). While McPherson and others have found similar results; in two decades, Americans' networks have become smaller, while still kin-centered and homogeneous in terms of race and ethnicity (though not in terms of age and education). As discussed earlier, the cause of various social changes may have influenced this decline of confidants.

The decline of Americans' core discussion networks has several implications at the individual and societal levels. At the individual level, it may be an indication of reduced social capital (to be discussed more in detail in the following section). At the societal level, it may imply a decrease in social trust and cooperation. The following section discusses how the decline of civic engagement leads to weakened social trust and cooperation at the group or societal levels.

### **Social capital defined**

The definition of social capital varies depending on the approach scholars have taken; however, the predominant usage of social capital has been that of a resource to individuals (Bourdieu, 1985; Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1990). While, Coleman emphasized social structure that facilitated the action of certain members within it to produce social

capital, Bourdieu emphasized the benefits members could acquire by membership or investments, whereas Burt emphasized the social ties that facilitated resource or information exchange. Regardless of the differences, they all understood and defined social capital as “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structure” (Portes, 1998, p. 6). Drawing on Portes’s all-encompassing definition, this study defines social capital as the benefits granted to members of an organization by having mere membership. As types of organizations vary, along with the resources in which members are able to contribute, capital available to members may also vary, ranging from human capital (i.e., skills, education, and experiences), and market capital (i.e., tangible material goods), to social capital (i.e., intangible resources).

Social capital has been examined from a number of perspectives, including organizational communication, sociology, political science, information system, and social network. But, because of its “circus-tent quality” (De Souza Briggs, 1997), some scholars have criticized the term, referring to it as “a wonderful elastic term” (Lappe & DuBois, 1997) that can be applied to understand various social phenomena. This broad definition has received much criticism. However, despite criticisms, examining social capital has explanatory power, especially for understanding the intangible resources available in a social network.

### **Social ties and social capital**

In recent years, social network scholars have taken the concept and applied it to social networks studies to understand how social capital can be accumulated and utilized within bounded social structures or organizations. In the social network literature, with its

emphasis on structure, social capital is defined as, “a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of actors...within the structure” (Coleman, 1990, p. 302). As such, available social capital within a social network primarily depends on a network’s structure and what the individuals within that network do.

Simply put, in social network studies, social capital is largely defined as the available social ties and which resources these social ties are willing to offer to the individuals. One’s social ties may be many or only a few. But, regardless of the number of social ties, one’s ability to tap into available social capital within the network he/she belongs to depends on his/her location within the network. Another important factor that determines whether or not an individual is able to access others’ resources depends on the strength of ties. Individuals can sever ties, establish new ties, or strengthen or weaken particular ties in order to accrue more social capital.

One of the most cited studies is Granovetter’s “Strength of Weak Ties” (1978). In his famous work, Granovetter argued that job seekers are able to find their ideal jobs through weak ties rather than strong ties. This is because new and novel information depletes faster with strong ties because individuals interact and converse with these individuals much more often than those with whom they have weak ties. Therefore, within tight homogenous clusters, new information depletes more quickly, while there is more new information when conversing with weak ties because there are less frequent interactions. Hence, Granovetter’s study shows that information, such as a new job opening, is often transferred through weak ties, such as father’s colleagues or mother’s friend’s husband.

While Granovetter measured relationships by strength or closeness, Burt (2000) distinguished relationships as being either bonding or bridging ties. Bonding, here, refers to the relationships that individuals have with their strong ties. Bonding is necessary for social support. The more embedded one is within a tightly knit network, the more centralized that person is and hence, the more power that individual holds (e.g., to control information or relationships). Bridging, on the other hand, refers to the weak ties that individuals have within their networks, as well as the ties that are several degrees removed from the individual's network (e.g., a friend of a friend who is in a network to which the individual does not have direct access).

This bridging function is more important for business purposes than social purposes, as actors function as bridges to create relations across different networks. The bridging role offers benefits such as the power to control information. More specifically, because their relationships span networks, individuals functioning as bridges are able to have more non-redundant sources, have more control on who receives what information, and also have more control over third-party relationships.

These studies examined above explain the importance of having both bonding and bridging ties as well as weak and strong ties within a network. Another aspect of a social network is its composition. The composition of a network explains why people develop relationships the way they do; this is explained by the homophily theory. McPherson, Smith-Loving, and Cook (2001) found that individuals form ties based on a like-me principle and are more likely to have ties with those who share similar characteristics (roughly in the order of race and ethnicity, age, religion, education, occupation, and gender). McPherson and others also found that geographic location, families, and

organizational memberships also create the context in which people form homophilous relations (2001). These researchers also found that individuals perceive homophilous relations to be more trustworthy, credible, and more influential compared to heterophilous relations. In other words, similarities in terms of race and ethnicity, age, religion, education, occupation, and gender provide the basis to trust, confide, and be influenced by others who are like themselves; therefore, individuals tend to become members of and build relationships with people whom they share similar attributes.

The studies examined above show that the strength of ties and the similarities between ties could limit or maximize one's social capital. For instance, if an individual only has strong ties, and those ties are only embedded in one tightly knit network in which everyone is very similar (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, education), the available social capital (i.e., type and amount) could be very minimal. On the other hand, an individual who is a member of a number of networks in which the members do not share many similarities, and who has both strong and weak ties within those networks, may have much more social capital than the individual describe above. However, the former individual would have much more social support, given that everyone is very well-connected to everyone else and therefore would know immediately if someone was in trouble, whereas the person in the second case would have to inform the networks he/she belongs to because of the loose connections. Therefore, one's social capital depends largely on the strength of ties and the types of networks he/she is affiliated to as a member. Thus, those who branch out and form weak ties with heterophilous others accrue more social capital that those who only maintain bonding ties with their strong ties.



## **Social capital at the group level**

While there is social capital, an individual could “reap” benefits within a network such as gaining access to new and novel information and acquiring other skill sets, social capital could be much more robust at the group level as long as individuals continue to contribute to the group (Lin, 2001).

While some scholars only examine social capital at the individual level, others emphasized the importance of examining social capital at the group level. As Putnam defined social capital as “connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (2000, p. 19) that “allow people to resolve collective problems more easily, ...grease the wheels that allow communities to advance smoothly, ...and develops or maintains character traits that are good for the rest of society” (p. 288), scholars were prompted to examine social capital as an aspect of communities.

Hence, there are a number of resources or benefits that social capital facilitates at the group level. Putnam (1993) has also suggested that social capital facilitates trust, cooperation, and mutually supportive relations in communities. Therefore, the more people contribute to their group, the more public goods (in different forms) become available. In other words, the more people join associations, the stronger the groups will become because their members will be more trusting of one another, more cooperative, and also more supportive of one another.

In terms of the actual behavior in building social capital, previous studies suggest the need for collective action. The collective action theory emphasizes the mutual benefits and the “the possibility of benefits from coordinated action” (Marwell & Oliver,

1993, p. 2). This focus stemmed from Samuelson's (1954) idea of people benefitting from public goods, such as parks and libraries, by contributing to these collective resources. Despite free riders who do not pay anything, or social loafers who do not contribute as much, Marwell and Oliver (1993) found that when individuals are highly connected, they are more likely to contribute and support public goods.

Monge and his colleagues, in their examination of the repository of public information, which is computer-mediated communication, found that individuals invest to the extent to which they perceive others contribute to the public good (Fulk, Monge, & Yuan, 2005; Yuan, Fulk, & Monge, 2007). Therefore, in order for the information bank of an organization, the intranet, to become more active, individuals needed to perceive that they were not the only ones contributing to the shared resources. Previous research has especially focused on collective action and mobilization. Knoke (1990) found that individuals in central positions were more likely to participate and contribute, in comparison to those in periphery positions. Similarly, in an inter-organizational context, the networks that were central in their industries were more likely to be put in mobilizing efforts to connect organizations (Laumann, Knoke, & Kim, 1985). Thus, in order for organizations to be effective in connecting smaller networks and encouraging active exchange of information for overall organizations' effectiveness, collective action as well as position or structures of individuals or organizations were found to be important.

Given the importance of examining social capital at both individual and group levels, Woolcock (1998) emphasized the importance of examining social capital at both individual and group levels (or organizational, societal). Following Woolcock, this study examined social capital at both individual and group levels.

## **Communicative social capital**

Despite a plethora of studies on the definition of social capital and what it entails, there have been limited studies on the communicative aspects. While social interactions lead to social capital, which further leads to an increase in civic engagement, what actually happens between the social ties within the social interactions in terms of communication has been largely underexplored. Rojas, Shah and Friedland (2011) argued that “it is not just social ties but social ties filled with communicative practices that encourage and foster civic participation” (p. 691). In other words, studies have examined types of social ties and the importance of weak and strong ties; however, they have not found how communicative practices in social ties encourage/discourage individuals’ perspective toward associational membership and whether or not communicative practices of social ties could bring synergy effects in fostering opportunities for others to engage in civic duties.

Rojas and his colleagues also argued that the link between social capital and trust and reciprocity has been inconsistent. Indeed, Uslander (1998) and Shah (1998) found a weak or nonexistent link between trust and reciprocity with engagement. Moreover, studies have found that as network size increases, commitment to and participation in group activities decreases (e.g., Festinger, 1951; Knoke, 1990). Therefore, it could not be assumed that increase in network size would bring more engagement or increase in engagement resulting from an increase in trust and reciprocity.

Hence, Rojas and others called for in-depth examination of communicative perspective of social capital to better understand the “exchange of information and shared meaning that flow through social ties” (p. 692). More specifically, Rojas and others

emphasized the importance of political conversation within a network. Studies have shown that political conversations leads to increase in issue reflection (McLeod et al., 1999), political knowledge, argument quality/repertoire (Cappella et al., 2002; Kim et al., 1999), reduction in attitude uncertainty (Fishkin, 1995) and as result influence civic engagement (Shah et al., 2005; Wyatt et al., 2000). Other activities such as newspaper reading (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; McLeod et al., 1996) and news television viewing (Eveland, 2001) were also found to have positive influence on civic and political activities.

Other than the aforementioned individual activities, group activities were also found to influence civic and political engagement. Responding to Kim and Ball-Rokeach's (2006) call to "position communication structure and processes at the center of the inquiry into civic engagement" (pp. 173-174), Rojas and others have developed a framework called Communicatively Integrated Community (hereafter CIC). CIC is a community that creates communicative social capital that is "the interplay of institutional affiliation, personal networks, mass media use, and political talk above and beyond the effects of these factors individually." (p. 695). As such, communicative social capital is created "when structural connections intersect with political information and civic orientation" (p. 695). Therefore, in understanding communicative social capital, one needs to examine individuals' positions within networks (structural) in relation to individuals' resources (e.g., political news exposure, information). More specifically, Rojas and others found that news exposure and attention along with conversational frequency and orientation toward understanding, in relation to associational membership

and personal network size were found to have positive relationships with an increase in civic engagement.

In such a way, Rojas and other suggested that linkage between individuals and between individuals and groups would shed light on the relationship patterns at the group level, which would further reveal potential for collective action. Therefore, in order to understand the communicative aspect of social capital at both individual and group levels, Rojas and others specifically examined interpersonal networks and associational membership of a network. However, Rojas and others' study was conducted in Columbia using qualitative methods. Also, CIC is only at its initial stage of theory development that positions communication function at its center in understanding social capital in relation to both civic and political engagement. Therefore, more research is needed to better understand the communicative aspect of social capital at both individual and group levels and how communication influences civic virtues positively so that civic and political engagement could be increased.

### **Social capital of ethnically diverse groups**

Despite the growing number of minorities in the United States, examination of social capital in varying ethnic groups has been limited. Study of social capital in relation to cultural ethnicity has been stretched wide but thin. Scholars have examined African Americans' and Latinos' social capital in attaining economic and social advancement (Musick Wilson, & Bynum, 2000), the relationship between media-use and social capital for ethnic minorities (Beaudoin, 2011), African Americans' social capital and civic and political engagement in relation to religion (Hoffman & Appiah, 2006), the social capital-

building processes of Turkish women (Ogan & d'Haenens, 2009), and the bonding and bridging of social capital for immigrants in relation to media use (Chen & Thorson, 2007).

Social capital studies in relation to ethnic groups have been largely divided into two types. The first type is how social capital in relation to media use is different across ethnic groups (Beaudoin, 2011; Chen & Thorson, 2007). For instance, Chen and Thorson's quantitative study (2007) found that both bonding and bridging capital influenced Whites and ethnic groups positively in terms of community participation. However, Chen and Thorson found that immigrants who used more English news media tended to participate in ethnic community activities less. Also, their findings showed that although knowledge of American politics was non-significant, duration of stay in America significantly influenced the community participation.

The other stream of research in terms of social capital of ethnic groups has been social capital in relation to religion. Hoffman and Appiah (2005) found that religious involvement increased social capital for Blacks; and Choi (2005) and Jang and Kim's study (forthcoming) identified religious capital to be the most important capital for Koreans in the United States because churches become hubs for social activities and resources.

However, both research streams are limited and more studies are needed to see how and in what ways social capital is related to religion, media use, and other characteristics unique to each ethnic group under examination. Also, closer examination of the ways that bonding and bridging capital function differently will highlight the ways in which different ethnic groups associate their close ties with weak ties. These studies

may in turn help to explain how the homogeneity of ethnic groups influences the creation and maintenance of social capital within those ethnic groups.

**Religious social capital of the Korean diaspora**

Previous studies found that Korean communities have a plethora of religious social capital (Choi, 2005; Jang & Kim, forthcoming). Of the facilities and services available within Korean social enclaves, churches have been found to play a crucial role to Koreans in the community (Choi, 2005). The statistics show its importance in Korean social enclaves. [However, the number may not be exact because the churches have to pay a fee and register themselves to be added on the Korean church directory]. The average membership of Asian churches in the United States, including Korean churches, has been reported to be about 450 (KCCD).

**Table 2. 10 States with the highest number of Korean churches in America**

State	Number of churches
California	1283
New York	435
New Jersey	231
Virginia	199
Illinois	194
Washington	193
Georgia	190
Texas	187
Maryland	151
Hawaii	73
Total in USA	4168

Found in the Korean churches Yellow Pages as May, 2011

Although the exact number of members in each Korean church is difficult to estimate, Hurh and Kim (1990) and Min and Bozorgmehr (2000) asserted that 60-70% of Koreans in the United States attend church. Of this estimate, Min and Bozorgmehr (2000)

suggested that Protestants consist of 60%, Catholics, 20%, and other religions or no religious affiliation, around 20%.

In Korean communities in the United States, churches are the center of social, educational, and community affairs (Choi, 2005; Givens, 1939). As a site of gathering for Koreans, churches provided English classes to the newly immigrated Koreans, and Korean classes to teach the culture, language, and traditional poems, songs, and dance to the younger generations (Choi, 2005). More specifically, churches provide tangible resources, such as help with acquiring driver's licenses and social security numbers, admitting children to school, and finding temporary jobs and apartments (Choi, 2005; Givens, 1939; Hurh, & Kim, 1990; Smidt, 2003). For these benefits, local churches have been known as a go-to place for those who need help from the community.

In these ways, Korean churches have provided much tangible as well as intangible social capital to Koreans living in America. More specifically, churches act as a bridge to help Koreans maintain their connection to their homeland, emotionally as well as socially. Also, churches have been a support system for Korean families to help the second generation Koreans maintain their cultural identities as Korean descents (Eckund, 2006; Jang & Kim, forthcoming; Kim, 2006).

In such a way, religious social capital for the Korean Diaspora is abundant. Studies that have examined religious social capital in Korea found that in Korean churches regardless of church size, members tend to have high trust toward others and are more likely to have emotional commonalities with one another in comparison to other non-religious associations (Jung & Jang, 2008). This was because Christian beliefs strongly encourage understanding and serving others and sacrificing self. Jung and Jang



suggested that because of these beliefs, churchgoers have a high tolerance for others' shortcomings and unbalanced exchanges that could be disadvantageous. Therefore, religious social churches in Korea were found to have a high trust with one another.

This study focuses specifically on the Korean diaspora residing in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. As shown in table 2, Maryland and Virginia are two of the states included in top ten states with the highest number of Korean churches in America, with the two number together, it ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> on the list. This could indicate that Koreans residing in the Washington, DC, area seek religion more than Koreans residing in other cities with a greater number of the Korean populations to church ratio such as Chicago and New Jersey.

### **Intellectual capital & market capital**

Korean immigrants are one of the most educated ethnic groups in the United States. According to the 1999 United Way data, 35% of Koreans in Los Angeles held a bachelor's degree or higher. The Business Owners Survey (1992) also found that 59% of Korean entrepreneurs had bachelor's degrees or higher, a much higher percentage than entrepreneurs of other ethnic groups. Moreover, Min and Bozorgmehr (2000) found that 54% of Korean respondents have had professional, executive, and managerial positions in Korea before coming to the United States and only four percent of the respondents had held blue-collar jobs.

Koreans have been found to start family businesses, as family businesses are encouraged in the host country. Research shows that kinship ties foster social capital such as solidarity, trust, and reciprocal obligation (Kim & Hurh, 1985; Light et al., 1994; Yoon, 1991). The social capital that stems from kinship ties provides resources for

entrepreneurship such as unpaid family labor, financial capital, business information and intro-family loans (Valdez, 2008). Moreover, ethnic minorities chose to start family businesses due to disadvantageous circumstances in the host country such as blocked mobility in the general labor market (Borjas, 1990; Piore, 1979).

Koreans have been found to have the most market capital when starting businesses. Koreans have been found to borrow startup capital from banks or family members at least twice as much as Blacks, Mexicans, and non-Mexican Whites (Valdez, 2008). Valdez's finding suggests that Koreans are more likely to have family or the ability to borrow from banks than other groups. That is, they hold more market capital compared to other groups (2008). This could be attributed to market capital often used by Koreans called the *kye* system (Light, 1972). *Kye* is a rotating credit system where participating members put in a designated amount of money every term and everyone takes a turn receiving the money. It is useful in accumulating a large sum of money to make big investments such as purchasing house, cars, paying college tuition, or starting a family business.

### **Human capital**

Another important capital available to Koreans in the United States is human capital. As the first generation Korean immigrants' biggest challenge in settling down in the host society was language, their children, the second generation Korean Americans, have been found to be one of the most important sources of social capital (Jang & Kim, forthcoming). Children become the "mouth, hands, feet and brain" of their parents as they have to help their parents carry out daily functions including but not limited to calling insurance companies, receiving customers for their family businesses, translating

various documents, and teaching them American values. The parents of second generation Korean Americans, too, are important social capital, because parents act as a bridge that connect them to the Korean language, values, and culture (Jang & Kim, forthcoming).

Other than family members, those who came from the same province and/or those who graduated from the same school have been found to be strong social capital to Koreans in America. Because Koreans consider *hak-yeon* (high school or college alumnus and alumna) and *ji-yeon* (acquaintances through hometown) to be strong commonalities between relationships (as they are bound to know someone who has mutual relationships with both parties), trust becomes the bases of these relationships. Therefore, in places where there are many Koreans, there are also alumni associations and regional associations so that Koreans can find those whom they trust and can find commonalities with. Also, because universities are highly competitive, and therefore difficult to enter, and as each province in Korea has strong political preferences, those who share *hak-yeon* or *ji-yeon* have a strong sense of comradeship and solidarity. Therefore, these relationships become important when Koreans need special help (these ties could introduce jobs for the children or become business partners or *kye* members) or seek out social gatherings.

As illustrated, Korean diaspora offer a plethora of social capital including the religious social capital (Choi, 2005; Hurh & Kim, 1990), physical capital (Choi, 2005), market capital (Valdez, 2008), and human capital (Choi, 2005; Jang & Kim, forthcoming) for Koreans living in America. As such, there are a number of easily accessible tangible and intangible social capitals available to Koreans in America. However, despite its

abundant social capital, much has been invested in children's educational and social realms; that is, much of social capital has been utilized to acquire more information on education, daily functions and socialization within the social enclaves (Jang & Kim, forthcoming).

Therefore, based on the preceding review of the literature related to social capital, and the social capital of the Korean Diaspora, the following research questions are asked:

RQ2a: How does the Korean diaspora create opportunities for social capital?

RQ2b: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of social capital?

### **Civic Engagement**

The level of democracy in a given society can be measured by its citizens' civic engagement (Putnam, 2000, Rossteutscher, 2008). Civic engagement, or civic participation, has been defined as "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concerns" (APA, 2008). There are various forms of civic engagement, and Americans have been joining these associations for generations. In fact, Americans are joiners (Schlesinger, 1944). Americans have joined and continue to join associations ranging from church-related groups, labor unions, fraternal and veteran's organizations, and school-service groups (such as Parent Teacher Associations), to professional associations and women's organizations. In fact, the 2000 World Value Survey found that 85.5% of participants surveyed belonged to associations. Of the 70 countries examined, the United States ranked third. In fact, amongst the advanced industrial world, Americans are by far the most church-going people (Skocpol, 1999).

## **Social changes that shifted civic engagement**

However, the types of associations joined by Americans have changed over the years. According to Skocpol (1999), affiliations in the middle of the twentieth century were led by voluntary associations related to government, politics, and community affairs. These affiliations, however, were often overtaken by privileged and well-educated activist groups who sought social changes for America (p. 462).

In the 1950's, the largest associations were occupationally based membership federations, such as the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organization, and the American Farm Bureau Federation. Most of the dominant affiliations consisted of male-led fraternal and veterans' groups and female-led religious and civic associations (p. 463). However, these dominant affiliations were weakened due to social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, movements for women's rights, the dignity of homosexuals, the unionization of farm workers and the mobilization of other non-White ethnic minorities, as well as movements that opposed the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War (Gitlin, 1989; Jenkins & Perrow, 1977). As these social movements arose, they launched new associations to maintain their group identities, and the old associations subsequently became weaker and smaller in number (see Skocpol, 1999). During the forty years of drastic social change between 1958 and 1998, the number of American national associations grew about 253 percent and the mushrooming phenomena continued between 1960 and 1990 (Skocpol, 1999, p. 471).

This shift from old associations to new associations brought a number of important societal changes, one of which is the increased interaction between different social classes (Son, 2007). Son (2007) argued that when the old associations were

dominant in society, the narrow criteria required for membership (e.g., male, White) left many people unable to join despite their interest. By contrast, the new associations created linkages between different groups because increased interactions encouraged mutual understanding between different classes. This shift, then, resulted in weakened class identities and consciousness (Skocpol, 2003; Son, 2007). As a result of these weakened class identities and consciousness, many of those who did not have opportunities to join associations suddenly gained access to do so. Moreover, many were able to become leaders within the new associations (Skocpol, 1999, 2003). These new opportunities reflected the United States as a classless society and further encouraged civic participation. Along with the social movements that changed the nation, Skocpol's (1999, 2003) argument that civic participation creates linkages between different groups helps to explain the sudden growth in the number of the new associations.

### **Civic engagement today**

Despite the sharp increase in the number of associations between 1960 and 1990, by 2000, a noticeable decrease was evident in terms of levels of civic engagement. As Putnam has argued, civic engagement has declined (1995). However, Putnam's observations are challenged by newer findings. The first-ever federal study of civic engagement that looked at how often Americans engaged in a variety of activities, including political action, service, joining/belonging to groups, and connecting to information and current events, yielded results that contradicted Putnam's study. The report of the *Civic Life in America* shows that between 2008 and 2009, nearly 58% of Americans helped their neighbors at least once a month, and that nearly 1.6 million more Americans did something to serve their communities in 2009 than the previous year —

the biggest jump in volunteering since 2003. However, due to the challenges of tallying civic engagement across the nation, and because the *Civic Life in America* does not report Americans' civic engagement before 2009, it is difficult to determine what caused the disparity between Putnam's last report and the *Civic Life in America*'s report. Clearly, the current status of Americans' civic engagement is debatable.

### **Social capital and civic engagement**

Because social capital facilitates trust and cooperation (Gundelach & Torpe, 1997) in societies that are most healthy (Cohen, Doyle, Skoner, Rabin, & Gwaltney, 1997) and wealthy (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Putnam, 1993), it is important for any group or society to produce and maintain much social capital. This importance has been made evident through studies that show a link between social capital and civic and political engagement. Rossteutscher (2008) succinctly stated that "trust and voluntary engagement relates strongly to the spread of political participation, political interest, confidence in government, and the diffusion of democratic values" (p. 235). Accordingly, in analyzing 70 countries worldwide in terms of the connection between trust, voluntary engagement, and political participation, Rossteutscher found the support for the western countries (but not for Asian countries). Thus, we see a cyclical link here: joining associations leads to social interactions amongst members and conversations that produce opportunities for civic engagement: here, social interactions and conversations are interactions that lead to optimistic civic virtue (trust and cooperation) and conversations that focus on political news and events, respectively (Rojas et al., 2011). When people engage in civic activities such as joining an association, social capital is produced that further facilitates trust (this finding still needs more research), cooperation, and mutual support. And, again, social

capital has been found to have positive influence on civic and political participation. However, more research is needed to understand how communicative social capital is produced and how it has positive influence on civic and political engagement at both individual and group levels.

### **Political Engagement**

Civic engagement and political engagement are not the same. Political participation is defined as that which “affords citizens in a democracy an opportunity to communicate information to government officials about their concerns and preferences and to put pressure on them to respond” (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995, p. 37). Individuals who have concerns to raise could do so in various ways (e.g., communicating directly with public officials, indirectly influencing the electoral outcomes) and at different levels (i.e., local and state governments). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) argued that three factors determine political participation: resources, recruitment, and psychological orientation.

In terms of resources, Verba and others (1995) posited that participants need time, money, and skills to participate in political activities. Here, skills refer to contacting public officials, working in campaigns, serving on local boards, or working with others on community problems (p. 44), all of which are needed to effectively carry out one’s goal. Moreover, research shows that socioeconomic and demographic variables are related to various forms of participation (e.g., Verba & Nie, 1972). In terms of recruitment, research shows that individuals are more likely to participate in political activities when they are asked to do so (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Skocpol & Fiorina,



1999). In other words, many Americans do not participate because they simply have not been asked.

The literature on political engagement also discusses how individual's interest and optimism in politics also influences involvement. Interest and optimism are often reflected in political efficacy. Here, political efficacy is defined as "the feeling that political social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change" (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954, p. 187). An individual's interest and optimism in politics also influences involvement. Interest and optimism are often reflected in political efficacy. Here, political efficacy is defined as "the feeling that political social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change" (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954, p. 187). Despite the importance of this topic, the difficulty of measuring the level of involvement and types of political engagement by Americans has made nationwide surveys and large-scale studies quite scarce. Also, to the author's knowledge, studies have not separated behaviors from knowledge and attitude, along with resources, recruitment, and psychological orientation, when examining groups under investigation. Therefore, following Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad's (2008) measure of civic and political engagement, as well as Verba and colleagues' (1995) three factors that determine political engagement, the author will investigate the group under examination.

### **Civic and political engagement of ethnically diverse groups**

Most of the literature has been primarily concerned with the native-born (Putnam, 2000; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995) rather than the newly immigrated ethnic minorities. This is in part because many immigrants are not yet U.S. citizens (65% of immigrants cannot vote) (Jones-Correa, 1998; Wong 2006). However, despite the privilege to participate in electoral activities, immigrant community organizations are on the rise, becoming both more visible and more active. In fact, the number of ethnic minorities in the United States is on the rise. In 1970, ethnic minorities in America were counted around 11 million and as of 2008, the number reached 67 million. In 2050, ethnic minorities are projected to reach 171 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

Coincidentally, despite the visibility of ethnic community organizations in recent decades, recent studies have suggested immigration as one of the primary reasons for the decline of civic engagement and the persistent racial and ethnic gaps in participation (Camarota, 2001; Gimpel, 1999). Here, immigrants include all foreign-born individuals and span all legal statuses (e.g., naturalized citizen, legal residents, legal temporary visitors, undocumented residents). Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad also found that the period of sudden growth in the Latin and Asian American populations have coincided with the steepest decrease in civic participation (2008).

Others have disputed this stance, arguing that these immigrants' experiences have not been accurately accounted for (Vasquez, 2003). These studies suggested that immigrants have been participating in civic engagement on their own terms, and so their activities have not been adequately accounted for in the more general measure of

mainstream civic engagement. Verba and others also found that African Americans and Latinos have been found to spend more time on electoral campaigns than Anglo-whites (1995, p. 235). However, when it came to donating money for campaigns, Whites were found to give substantially more than African-Americans or Latinos (Verba et al., 1995 p. 236). In line with Vasquez's argument, Verba and others found in their examination of electoral voting that Latinos were significantly less active than Whites and African-Americans. They explained that this was because Latino participants were interviewed regardless of their legal status (i.e., many were not citizens). As studies above show, types of civic and political engagement were different across ethnic differences (i.e., depending on legal status, types of civic engagements preferred by ethnic groups) depending on the problems ethnic groups faced given their unique circumstances. These contentious findings call for more in-depth investigations of the civic engagement of ethnic minorities by incorporating the vastly different experiences of each immigrant group.

### **Factors that influence ethnic groups**

Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad (2008) highlighted several factors that influence the civic and political engagement of ethnic groups. The authors suggested that place, group, and organization type are three factors that influence the civic and political engagements of ethnic groups. First, in terms of the *place*, the size of the city, existence of the ethnic enclave, and political and civic culture all influence how ethnic minorities engage in civic and political activities. Second, the *type of group*, that is, the socioeconomic status, legal status, recency of migration, mix of immigrant generation, and language fluency of the particular group all factor into the level of engagement. Third,

the *type of organization*, that is, its motivating goal or mission (e.g., religious, social, advocacy), resources (funding, personnel, physical location), leadership and membership, and connection to other groups also influence the level of civic and political engagement (p. 23). Although not all these factors are found to have direct influence on the level of civic and political involvement (e.g., a large ethnic community will not necessarily have more resources and/or be perceived to have political presence), these factors should be considered when examining the civic and political behaviors of ethnically diverse publics.

In terms of space, there are a number of ethnic social enclaves mushrooming throughout the United States and these spatially concentrated areas provide a unique space for ethnically diverse groups to maintain their cultural practices. Garcia (2005) suggested that these ethnic enclaves provide immigrants access to people of similar origin, “facilitating the development of social networks that help immigrants settle into a new community” (as cited in Bernstein & Norwood, 2008). Bachrach and Zautria (1985) posited that these ethnic enclaves provide opportunities for public expression of opinions on community issues. In other words, these ethnic enclaves function as an outlet through which people can voice their opinions and raise concerns to the larger community.

Scholars examining the civic and political engagement of ethnic minorities must consider the *type of group*, as the socioeconomic status, legal status, recency of migration, mix of immigrant generation, and language fluency of the particular group all factor in the level of engagement. For instance, Mexican immigrants, amongst the lowest-income immigrant groups with the highest rates of unauthorized residents, tend to have the fewest civic organizations and a weaker political presence (Ramakrishnan & Bloemraad, 2008). Similarly, Parenti (1967) argued that socioeconomic advancement could bring political

salience, providing more resources for ethnic minorities to build civic organizations. Parenti also argued that as ethnic minorities seek upward mobility, they might face more prejudice and discrimination, though they may also gain more psychological strength to make more political demands (1967). Moreover, the more political demands a group makes, the more visible and influential the group becomes in the community (e.g., Vietnamese organizations in Orange County, CA) (Ramakrishnan & Bloemraad, 2008).

Another factor that needs to be included under this type of group category is group consciousness. Studies have shown that group identification influences the level of civic and political engagement (Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999; Masuoka, 2008; Stokes, 2003; Stokes-Brown, 2009; Uslaner & Conley, 2003). For instance, Uslaner and Conley (2003) found that ethnic Chinese in Los Angeles with strong ethnic identifications were more likely to withdraw from civic participation or only belong to organizations made up of their nationality. Moreover, Stokes-Brown (2009) found that the political engagement of Latino Americans is influenced by racial identity. Stokes-Brown found that Latinos who racially self-identified as “Black” are less likely to trust government than those who self-identified as “some other race.” Those individuals who self-identified as “some other race” were found to have lower levels of political efficacy and were less likely to participate in politics. The author concludes that racial ambiguity for Latinos has negative consequences for political engagement because “some other race” does not indicate a distinct racial identification (2009).

Scholars examining the civic and political engagement of ethnic minorities must also consider the types of organization, or the motivating goal or mission of organizations (e.g., religious, social, and advocacy), resources (funding, personnel, and physical

location), leadership and membership, and the connection to other groups of the particular ethnic group under examination. Literature on the civic and political engagement of ethnic minorities in relation to the type of organization has primarily focused on religion and churches (Brown & Brown, 2003; Brown, McKenzie, & Taylor, 2003; Calhoun-Brown, 1996; Hoffman & Appiah, 2008; Jamal, 2005).

A plethora of studies has shown that religion has a great influence on the civic and political engagement of African Americans (Brown & Brown, 2003; Brown, McKenzie, & Taylor, 2003; Calhoun-Brown, 1996; Hoffman & Appiah, 2008). The more involved African Americans are within their church, the more frequently they attend services and the more they are involved in their communities. For Arab Muslims as well, mosques have been found to directly influence political activity and civic participation. This is because for Arab Americans, the “mosque serves as a collectivizing forum that highlights Muslim common struggles in mainstream American society” (Jamal, 2005, p.18). Studies have also shown that religion is an important resource for Asian American Christians (Cherry, 2009). For instance, Ecklund and Park (2007) found that both Catholic and Protestant Asian Americans volunteer more than their nonreligious counterparts.

However, studies have shown that ethnic groups have different purposes when it comes to engaging in civic activities. Bernstein and Norwood (2008), in their examination of African American and Korean American church-attendees, found that African Americans attending public meetings would raise issues publicly, while Korean Americans tended to avoid conflicts. The purpose of attending these meetings for Korean Americans was to curtail future conflicts and to make new connections in the community.

This may also have to do with religious leaders' perception on politics. Ecklund's (2006) study found that pastors and members of second generation Korean churches see political involvement as peripheral and even digressive to their church's central mission. However, more studies are needed to substantiate whether this finding is consistent across a larger demographic. Also, more studies are needed to understand the intersection of ethnic identity, religion, and civic and political engagement.

### **Civic and Political Engagement of Koreans in the United States**

Even though Korean communities began to emerge in the 1980s, Im (2008) argued that Koreans were not very involved in Korean communities. Im further argued that because the third wave of Koreans who immigrated to America felt degradation of their socioeconomic status, which led to disappointment, the phenomena led to Koreans avoiding other Koreans. Koreans in the United States have sought after upward social mobility through education and economic achievement; however, their civic and political engagements have been very low. Former Los Angeles city councilman Mike Woo was quoted as saying, "in the hall of government, Asian Americans are invisible (Oct. 31, 1996)." A Korean American journalist K.W. Lee of the *Sacramento Union* and the *Korea Times* (English Edition) has said that, "Korean immigrants are blind, deaf, and mute and without spokespeople (Kim & Yu, 1996). Angela Oh, a Korean American civil rights activist has also lamented, "there are no elected officials of Korean descent serving on our school board, city council, board of supervisor, assembly or state senate" (Today, May 9, 1997). Such comments came in response to the racial discrimination against Korean Americans that was openly showcased in the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

In 1992, when four Los Angeles police officers who had brutally beaten motorist Rodney King were acquitted, Los Angeles broke out in violence, “claiming 58 lives, causing nearly 1 billion dollars’ worth of damage and more than 14,000 arrests” in just three days (Ong & Hee, 1993). The ethnic group that was affected the most was Koreans: more than 2,000 Korean businesses were looted or burned causing nearly 770 million dollars’ worth of losses (Kim, 1993). However, despite their heavy loss, they were not compensated nor were there any political organizations to represent them to demand for compensation.

After the 1992 riot, there were significant changes in Korean communities. Most important, the riot brought the community together. Scholars as well as the Korean community leaders posit that Koreans are becoming more politically conscious and have been since the 1992 Los Angeles riot. According to the statistics, the number of articles in the *L.A. Times* about Koreans’ political activities increased from 4.2% before the riots to 11.3% after the riots (Ban, & Adams, 1995). One reason for this significant increase was that Korean Americans realized that they needed to be politically empowered to defend themselves (Ban & Adams, 1995).

To this end, political associations sprung up noticeably after the 1992 incident. For instance, organizations such as Korean American Voters Alliance (KAVA), Coalitions for Korean American Voters (CKAV), Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates (KIWA), National Association of Korean Americans (NAKA) and Korean American Coalition (KAV) to name a few, have been active in increasing the voting turnout, as voting has been identified as the key to building a political voice for Korean Americans in the United States (Kim, 1995; Kim, 1996). Along with coalitions, there were a number



of meetings, conferences and round-table talks to discuss ways in which Korean Americans could be politically empowered so that they can voice their needs.

### **Religious Social Capital and Civic and political Engagement for the Korean Diaspora**

Studies have shown a close relationship between religious institutions and civic involvement for Koreans in America (Cherry, 2009; Ecklund, 2005a, 2005b, 2007; Ecklund & Park, 2005; Mo, 2000). However, scholars have a different understanding of the relationship between religious associations and political involvement of Koreans in the United States. Specifically, Mo (2000) posited that the most powerful institutions in the Korean community, that is, churches, “discourages participation and encourages passivity and conservatism” (p. 159). Mo, as an example, gave the campaign that was launched to petition for an anti-gay ballot initiative by a number of Korean churches in California (2000) to demonstrate that Korean churches have been especially conservative on social justice.

The political inactiveness has also been shown to be consistent amongst Korean American youth. Korean American children were found to lack confidence and political efficacy when it comes to American politics. They were also found to have the least amount of political exposure at home as parents are not interested in American politics. Korean American youth were also found to have far more unsophisticated ideas of good citizenship, ideologies and partisanship compared to youths of other races (Mo, 2000). Mo argued that these reasons further deter Korean American youth from “developing cognitive skills and civic attitudes and participatory attributes necessary for great political participation (Mo, 2000, p.103). In a similar vein, another scholar, Aptekar (2009), with

the findings on political involvement of Chinese Americans, argued that Asian ethnic groups that fall under the model minority myth, such as Chinese and Korean, are viewed by the society to lack political interests. Therefore, political leadership often reaches out less and Asian Americans' political attempts are invisible and anomalous in the mainstream (p. 1527).

However, this argument contradicts others' assertions. First, Nie and his colleagues (1996) have posited that those who belong to social networks are more likely to be engaged in political activities than those who are not. Moreover, Ecklund (2005a, 2005b) in her examination of the relationship between Korean Americans' religious practices and civic participation asserted that religiosity has strengthened moral standards of Korean Americans and that Korean Americans believe upholding high moral standards learned at church translate into being a good and responsible American citizen (p. 4). In other words, though good citizenship may not translate into participating in political campaigns and voting, their psychological orientation on political activities or attitude toward good citizenship may be positively high. Ecklund further argued that Korean Americans' narrative of civic participation is more focused on an obligation towards American society, as Sewell (1996) has also previously proposed, rather than freedom or rights as American citizens. Furthermore, church attendees have been found to participate more in church-sponsored community services (Ecklund, 2005b) as well as volunteerism (Cherry, 2009; Ecklund & Park, 2007), which accounts for civic participation. Ecklund also argued that while none of her participants spoke specifically about creating political social movements, she found awareness of the kind of agency, injustice and identity, which are the basis of coalition-building (2006, p. 133).

However, as Ecklund's studies (2005a, 2005b) primarily examined second generation Korean Americans, excluding those who were born and raised in Korea and later immigrated to America as adults, it is difficult to generalize to what extent religious capital or religiosity influences their civic participation and how Koreans in the United States conceptualize civic and political responsibility. Despite these limitations Ecklund's studies (2005a, 2005b, 2007) shed light on how Korean Americans relate to what is being 'a good American' in relation to religious beliefs. She also called for another paradigm that will incorporate Asian Americans, ethnic minorities and Christianity in order to understand their civic and political engagement. As their identity and cultural resources are shaped and situated within their local churches, constructing civic identity in relation to their particular situations and their political interests is necessary to understanding the relationship between church and civic and political participation (2006).

### **Obstacles in the process of civic and political engagement**

Still, Koreans in America face many obstacles in the process of civic and political engagement. One of the barriers of political involvement of Korean Americans has been their legal status (Park, 1999). As the attainment of American citizenships is costly, time-consuming as well as complicated, and sometimes unnecessary, many maintain foreigner status in the United States. Regardless of the length of stay in America, with foreigner status (e.g., F-1, F-2, and greencard holders) Korean Americans can only participate in civic engagement and limited political participation (e.g., donating to politicians, writing to politicians).

Plus, another barrier has been the lack of familiarity with the American political system. As more than 70% of the Koreans in America are still foreign-born (Min, 1995),

many are unfamiliar with the American political system. Therefore, even with American citizenship, because most of Koreans in America have not been educated in America, there is limited knowledge on the political system and issues.

Moreover, the language barrier also prohibits Korean Americans from participating in politics (Park, 1999). The processes of political involvements are not user-friendly for Koreans in the United States. For instance, many governmental documents are not translated into Korean, which easily excludes those who are not proficient in English from participating in important activities such as electoral voting. Therefore, many nonprofit organizations have been established to bring awareness, increase the political power of the Korean communities, and to empower Koreans in America by providing legal assistance, counseling, as well as education on Korean culture to increase involvement of the second generation Korean Americans. However, these resources and information centers are still limited.

Despite these efforts to bring more awareness and increase the perceived political presence in the public arena, Koreans are still considered to have a weak political presence in local as well as mainstream society. Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad (2008) have found that despite a relatively small number of the population of Koreans residing in Garden Grove, Orange County in California, the number of Korean businesses was found to be higher in relation to the size of the population. However, despite the size of the Korean community, their political presence and weight as perceived by the local officials was found to be very low (2008). Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad contributed this to lack of community centers (p. 34). The authors further posited that such lack of organizations that buttress and support civic and political engagement could bring low electoral

participation, which, in turn, could bring low political visibility and influence in the local political arena. However, as scholars suggest, it is necessary to examine the Korean Diaspora's unique and different experiences to fully grasp the civic and political engagement in their terms.

As such, the literature revealed that Korean communities lack civic and political capital. Although churches have encouraged their members to participate in voluntary associations, such as aiding orphanages in North Korea and supporting missionaries overseas, and other activities to serve their local communities (e.g., Korean culture classes to assist families who have adopted Korean children) little social capital was invested in political engagement. In fact, Koreans have not been very involved in the political arena in local, state and government levels (Ban & Adams, 1995; Kim, 2010).

Whether it is religious beliefs or social capital provided within religious institution that influence the conceptualization of civic life and determine the scope of civic involvement remains debatable. However, this contentious point needs to be further investigated as 60-70 % of Koreans in the United States are said to be affiliated with Korean churches (Kim, 1999; Kwon, 2001; Min & Bozorgmehr, 2000). Moreover, it is important to understand how congregations that exchange information, share ideas and negotiate political ideals through various communication channels create and accumulate civic and political capitals. Therefore, understanding the influence of churches and its communicative function in shaping the civic lives of Korean Americans is crucial. Understanding the intersection between religious capital and communicative social capital provided by Korean churches as well as civic and political participation will

enable us to understand the role of social capital in the political empowerment process of Koreans in the United States.

Based on the preceding review of the literature related to the Korean Diaspora and their civic and political engagement, the following research questions are asked:

RQ3a: How does the Korean Diaspora make meaning of civic engagement?

RQ3b: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of political engagement?

RQ4: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of the relationship between social capital and the civic and political engagement of the Korean Diaspora?

### **Why social capital and civic and political engagement of the Korean Diaspora?**

There are a number of reasons to investigate the Korean Diaspora. First, the author is a Korean American who was born in Korea, and educated in the United States, Korea, and China. She has lived in the United States since she was twelve years old and has been very close to Korean communities in places where she lived (i.e., Portage, MD; Lansing, MD; Los Angeles, CA; Washington, DC metropolitan area). Therefore, she has linguistic skills, knowledge of the culture as well as access to the community to reach the larger population.

Second, despite the available social capital, as 60-70% of Koreans residing in America have been found to attend churches, they have been inactive when it comes to civic and political engagement. This is very different from groups such as African Americans or Muslims who have strong connections between religious activities and civic and political engagement.

Third, while Rossteutscher (2008) found that voluntary engagement is positively related to political engagement in Western societies, the link was not supported for Asian

countries. Of the Asian countries examined, Korea ranked first in terms of the percentage of people involved in associations, only 2% below Americans. However, the connection between voluntary association and political engagement was not supported. Although the Rossteutscher's study examined Koreans living in Korea, it could be speculated that Koreans' non-participating nature when it comes to civic and political engagement has carried over to the United States as well. This is interesting, given that Koreans have been targeted in a racial tension that led to civic unrest in Los Angeles in 1992 (to be discussed more in the section below) as well as other incidences that highlighted Korean ethnicity of those involved (\$67 million pants lawsuit<sup>1</sup> (Pearson vs. Chung) in 2005; Virginia tech<sup>2</sup> massacre 2007). Although these cases brought attention and awareness to the larger Korean population, despite the need to voice their opinions and empower themselves to address their concerns, Koreans have continued to be inactive in terms of civic and political engagement in the political realm.

For the reasons listed above, Koreans living in America are unique and different from other ethnic groups. Therefore, it is important to examine how such a different group, like Koreans, uses social capital in civic and political engagement and how their sense of community influences all of these aspects. As Koreans have now lived in America for over one hundred years, they occupy different positions (e.g., legal status, language preference, self-prescribed cultural identities, generation, racial identification), making it problematic to try to describe the entire group with one term. Therefore, this

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<sup>1</sup> In 2005, Roy L. Pearson, Jr., an administrative law judge in the District of Columbia filed a dispute with a dry cleaners, owned by a Korean, Soo Chung, over a lost pair of pants. Pearson demanded \$67 million for the loss. In 2007, the DC superior court judge Judith Bartnoff ruled in favor of the dry cleaners (Pearson vs. Chang).

<sup>2</sup> On April 16, 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, killed 32 people and wounded 25 others before committing suicide on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia. The massacre is the deadliest shooting incident in U.S. history by a single gunman (Szkotak, 2012).

study focuses specifically on the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC metropolitan area (e.g., parts of Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia).

While Washington, DC, is the political center of America, civic and political engagement of Korean Diaspora residing in Washington, DC, has not been previously examined, unlike the Korean diaspora in Los Angeles and New York. Also, for comprehensive understanding of the Korean Diaspora in the Washington, DC area, this study examines Koreans who hold various legal statuses, including citizens, greencard holders (residents), F-1 students (international students visa), and H1B (work visa). As cultural identity is not shaped by legal status (e.g., an international student may have resided in America for over 20 years and identify herself as a Korean American and be very active in terms of civic and political engagements while still holding a foreigner status). Therefore, this study uses the inclusive term, Diaspora, to include Korean descents that have various legal statuses, cultural identities and experiences living in America.

### **Contribution and Purpose of the Study**

This study seeks to examine civic and political engagement of the Korean Diaspora in the United States. More specifically, the study examines how the Korean descents residing in Washington, DC, metropolitan area identify and utilize social capital available to them in the community for civic and political engagement. There are a number of different capitals available to Koreans in Korean social enclaves such as religious, human, intellectual, and market capital. However, despite the varying type of social capital that facilitates trust and cooperation, civic engagement of Koreans living in the United States has been relatively low. The factors that have been previously identified



to encourage or inhibit civic and political engagement for Koreans have been debatable, and the relationship between church and civic and political participations has been contentious. Also, how social capital directly and indirectly influences their behaviors have not been identified in depth. Moreover, communicative social capital has been underexplored. More importantly, attitudes or psychological orientations Koreans have when it comes to civic and political engagement have also been largely under-examined. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how lack of civic and political engagement could be explained in relation to social capital and Koreans' unique community culture in the United States.

Hence, the findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature in several ways. First, the findings extend the social capital literature by revealing how social capital functions for Koreans. Specifically, the findings show how bonding/bridging and weak/strong ties work in the case of the Korean Diaspora and also how Koreans identify and utilize various social capital available in the community including communicative social capital. Second, findings contribute to the body of knowledge on civic and political engagement in general and civic and political engagement of ethnic minorities, specifically. The findings show how social capital relates to civic and political engagement for Koreans both behaviorally as well as in attitude. This finding, transferable to understanding other ethnic minorities, could be used to understand civic and political engagement of other ethnic Diasporas that share similarities with the Korean Diaspora. Moreover, the findings could further contribute to the theory building toward better understanding of social capital, civic and political behaviors of ethnic minorities.

### **Research Questions:**

Based on the preceding review of the literature related to social capital of the Korean Diaspora and their civic and political engagement, the following research questions are asked:

RQ1: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of their ethnic community?

RQ2a: How does the Korean diaspora create opportunities for social capital?

RQ2b: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of social capital?

RQ3a: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of civic engagement?

RQ3b: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of political engagement?

RQ4: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of the relationship between social capital and the civic and political engagement of the Korean Diaspora?

To address these research questions, a variety of research methods are proposed in the following chapter.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

In this chapter, I review the rationale for choosing qualitative research methodology, discuss the advantages of using the selected method, and explain the procedures of the study including data collection, analysis, evaluation and presentation.

#### **Rationale for Qualitative Research Methodology**

Given the exploratory nature of the study, the study employed qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods are appropriate for researchers who are “intrigued with the complexity of social interactions as expressed in daily life and with the meanings participants themselves attribute to these interactions” (Marshall & Rossman, 1992, p. 2). Therefore, “qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experiences of

participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In the process of obtaining these complexities embedded in the participants’ daily lives, the researchers are able to gather “detailed description of situations, events, people, interactions, and observe behaviors” (Patton, 1980, p. 22).

The qualitative research method is also appropriate for this study, as Rubin and Rubin (1995) have suggested, as the current state of the issues under investigation are still unclear, more exploration is needed to understand how and why things are happening.

Moreover, qualitative research methods are appropriate for studies that investigate issues that require “in-depth understanding that is best communicated through examples and rich narratives” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 51). By providing “thick” descriptive data, qualitative methods produce extensive data that illustrate the complexities of human experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Geertz, 1973; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This rich descriptive data describe and explain a phenomenon that quantitative data cannot. Corbin and Strauss (2008) explained that “it is the descriptive details that add the richness and variation and lift the findings out of the realm of the ordinary. It is depth of substance that makes the difference between thin, uninteresting findings and findings that have the potential to make a difference in policy and practice” (p. 306). For these reasons employing qualitative research methods were appropriate for this study.

## **In-depth Interviewing**

The in-depth interviewing method is appropriate as its goal is to obtain in-depth and open-ended narrative rather than trying to fit participants' experiences into certain categories (Patton, 1987). Therefore, although the interviewer may guide the conversation, the interviewer still "respects how the participant frames and structures the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 82). Hence, the greatest advantage of the interview method is its ability to understand the participants' experiences in greater depth and breadth. To do this, researchers need to build rapport with the participants. This could be achieved, by first, building trust, and more specifically, by explaining the purpose of the study, confidentiality of the participants' answers, and letting them know that there are no right or wrong answers (Lindlof, 1995). In these ways, researchers can build trustworthiness and credibility with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lindlof, 1995; McCracken, 1988).

However, there are limitations to this method. What is obtained using the interviewing method is only the participants' perception of the particular issue, therefore, the researcher needs to use other methods. Also, some participants may only provide what the researchers want to hear rather than providing their own experiences for the purposes of protecting themselves or because they feel uncomfortable sharing what the interviewer hopes to explore (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Therefore, to overcome some of these limitations, the researcher must disclose the purpose of the research, build rapport with each participant and make the interview setting comfortable so that the participants will feel comfortable discussing their own lives. The time, place, and language will be decided by the participants, according to the participants' preferences.

## **Participant selection**

In this research, 42 members of the Korean diaspora were interviewed between June 2011 and February 2012. The characteristics of participants varied in terms of age, gender, educational level, geographical locales, legal status, occupation, length of stay in the United States, religion, and native language. Variety in terms of the participants' backgrounds were sought after, as I expected individuals of different backgrounds to provide rich and varied experiences in terms of their ethnic community, social capital, and civic and political engagement. Because this study examined civic and political experiences, I limited the participants to those who have lived in America for more than 10 years. This was to ensure that participants have somewhat of familiarity with the American system and basic understanding of civic and political activities in America.

The participants were recruited through several sampling procedures: purposive and maximum variation. According to Merriam (1998), purposive sampling is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). I also used maximum variation sampling method to find as many individuals as possible who would be able to give “a variety of perspectives” and willing to participate. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), credibility of research increases when participants reflect “complementary understanding” or “different vantage points” (p. 67).

Therefore, I tried to find maximum variation with participants in terms of age, experiences, occupation, and duration of stay in America by asking my friends and acquaintances for leads. I reached a purposive sampling by searching the websites to find Korean associations and Korean business yellow pages to locate Korean-owned

businesses in the Washington, DC, area. Once I found websites and contact information of Korean associations, I sent them a recruitment letter (see Appendix B) via email or called them explaining the research and requesting an interview. A number of associations only had a telephone number on the yellow pages and many were not updated; of those that were still active, many associations did not pick up the phone and did not return voicemails. Some declined the interview when I explained the purpose of the interview. Therefore, although there were a number of associations appropriate for this interview I focused specifically on associations that were relevant to civic and political engagement and excluded associations that were based on hobbies. Therefore, despite approximately 38 available associations (DC4Koreans), only a few associations decided to participate in the interview. Ultimately, I ended the recruiting process once I established a saturation point (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) where I no longer received any responses that were new or different from the participants whom I interviewed earlier.

As a young Korean American woman, I was sensitive to participants who were different from me in terms of age, occupation, religion, gender, legal statuses, language, education, and experiences living in America. Since the goal was to reach maximum variation, I tried to recruit participants from various backgrounds to achieve a broad understanding of the Korean diaspora's experiences on civic and political engagement. It was expected that members of the Korean diaspora who are from differing backgrounds may have different experiences and perceptions of the Korean community, social capital, and civic and political engagement than I would have regarding these issues. It was also expected that different vantage points would yield better and in-depth understanding of the Korean diaspora's experiences regarding areas under examination.

Therefore, I purposely sought after individuals who have different backgrounds. Once consent was given, I explained the purpose of the research and provided sample questions along with the confidentiality measures, and how the participants would be contributing to the body of knowledge on the Korean diaspora, social capital, and civic and political engagement (See Appendix A).

The participants of this study could be summarized as the follows:

**Table 3. Participants’ demographic information**

Age	Gender	Legal status	Marital status	Language used
20s or under: 14 30s: 15 40s: 5 50s: 4 60s:4	Male: 23 Female: 19 Total: 42	Greencard: 6 Citizen: 34 Others: 2	Single: 18 Married w/ children: 18 Married w/o children: 6 Others: 0	Korean: 22 English:16 Both: 4
Membership in associations	Position at church	Years in America	Occupation	Current place of residency
Political: 4 Protestant: 34 Catholic: 1	Deacon/ deaconess: 18 Layman: 21 Pastor: 3	9 or less: 5 10-19yrs: 13 20-29yrs: 20 30 or more: 4	Professional: 21 Self-employed: 3 Student: 11 Pastor/nonprofit: 7 Retired:1	MD:35 VA: 6 DC: 1

The sample was skewed to those who are 1.5 generation Korean Americans, American citizens residing in Maryland, college educated, middle-class, religious, and those who were involved in civic engagement but did not have much experience in political engagement. In terms of age, participants’ ages ranged from late teens to mid-sixties, and the majority of the participants were in their twenties and thirties. In terms of education, most were college educated, some had masters or MBAs and a few had PhD degrees. Of the individuals who were married, most of them had children. Also, of the members who were affiliated with Korean churches, they held deacon/deaconess

positions at church or were highly involved with their churches. In terms of their legal status, majority of the participants had lived in America for more than 10 years and were U.S. citizens; if not, they held green cards. Because the interview protocol did not include a question that asked the interviewees' cultural identity, based on the interviews, it was difficult to determine whether the participants identified themselves as the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5 or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. The generational type is usually determined by place of birth, language preference, and length of residency in the United States, however, I did not impose a generational type based on this information.

The interview was conducted in the language preferred by the interviewees. All of the 1st generations preferred to use Korean and all of the 2nd generations preferred to use English. While the 1.5 generations used predominately Korean in the interview, they frequently used English during the interview. When they reverted back and forth between English and Korean, I used the corresponding language to meet their preferences.

The dissertation's unit of analysis was focused to individuals. The interview questions and analysis concentrated on individual, personal levels of meaning-making and interpretation of social capital, civic and political engagement rather than how they made meaning of these areas at organizational or societal levels.

### **Data collection procedures**

Forty-two, semi-structured interviews were conducted for this research. This semi-structured, in-depth interview format was used, as it works best to gain rapport with interviewees and collect a maximum amount of data and test hypotheses or research questions (Leech, 2002). The length of interviews ranged from 40-150 minutes; average was about 65 minutes in length. The questions were structured based on the research



questions that guided this study. And the research questions were guided by the current literature on ethnic community, social capital, civic and political engagement. The interview questions on the interview protocol were grounded on the research questions, which were grounded on the literature.

According to qualitative research scholars, interview protocols should include a list of questions that encourage rich description and explanations (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Leech, 2002; Yin, 2003). Therefore, most of the questions in the interview protocols were broad and open-ended questions that enabled the interviewees to fully elaborate and describe their experiences.

To test the interview question guide, I engaged in a pretest of the interview protocol with four members of the Korean diaspora before I began this study. Those interviewees provided suggestions for a few edits to the interview protocol in terms of the order and the wording of the questions to clarify and improve the protocol.

According to Leech (2002), there are a number of different types of questions one can ask. There are the grand tour questions that ask individuals to describe a typical day in your office; there are example questions that ask individuals to give examples of times when they use a particular technique; there are probes, also referred to as prompts that ask individuals to further explain. These probes include questions such as “Why?” that lead individuals to continue explaining or describing previously asked questions. Leech (2002) also emphasized the importance of listening and paying attention to the respondents in order to give enough time for the individuals to think through a question. While listening to the participants, I also engaged in note-taking to write down my reflections and interesting points participants mentioned. I also wrote notes on a notepad

if something a participant said prompted me to ask a follow-up probe that was originally not included in the semi-structured interview protocol. Fontana and Frey (2003) recommended that interviewers take notes regularly during an interview, try to be as inconspicuous as possible in the note-taking exercise, and analyze interview notes frequently (p. 79). When I reached the saturation point, I took notes much less than I did when I interviewed the first ten interviewees; however, even to the last interview, I engaged in the note-taking practice. Also, there was one interviewee who did not want to be audio-recorded and another interviewee who wanted me to turn off the recorder several times when he was discussing certain issues. Another interview was conducted via telephone. Therefore, in these three interviews, I took more detailed notes.

All the interviews were conducted on the day, time, and place mutually agreed between interviewees and I; interviews were mostly done in the interviewees' churches, offices, and cafes. At the start of the interview, I first introduced myself as a graduate student at the University of Maryland and explained the purpose of the study to the interviewees. Then, I reviewed the confidentiality agreement and asked them to read and give consent. Many questioned the purpose of giving consent and what the confidentiality agreement entailed out of unfamiliarity and curiosity. Once the form was signed, I asked interviewees for the permission to record the interview for the purpose of accuracy. Even when I explained that I would be the only one listening to the audio-taped recordings, some participants became nervous and began to talk as if he/she was talking to a third person thinking there would be someone else who would be listening to the recordings. In such cases, I had to reassure the participants and inform them again so that they could be comfortable with the situation and talk freely without being too conscious of being

recorded. After the interview, I thanked them for their time and insights, and answered any questions they had on the study.

Although this was supposed to be individual interviews, some participants wanted to participate with their spouse. Therefore, three married couples were interviewed together. Also, one of the interviews was conducted by telephone because we could not find a time/place that was available for both of us. The telephone interview was conducted just as the face-to-face interview would, in that I explained the confidentiality statement. The interview began once I received a verbal agreement; the participant signed and emailed back the consent form. Another interview could not find the time to do a telephone interview; therefore, I emailed the interview protocol and he emailed the interview back to me once he completed it.

As mentioned earlier, the interviews were conducted at the interviewees' churches, offices, or cafes; the purpose of this was to put the interviewees at ease so that they could comfortably describe and explain questions that I asked them. This also enabled me to build rapport with the interviewees, as the locations were often familiar with the participants and I could start off the interview by asking neutral questions about the location. Building rapport with interviewees is important because it puts interviewees at ease and helps researchers better understand interviewees, so that they can "take the role of the respondents and attempt to see the situation from their viewpoint" (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p. 78). Even interviewees whom I had frequent contact with were asked many questions several times to make sure their questions concerning this study were answered and to address any concerns or personal issues they had in participating in this research.

In addition to rapport building, establishing trust is another important aspect in conducting in-depth interviews. In order to build trust, I was honest and transparent about myself and the research project. Some of interviewees were interested in me personally, in terms of my age, progress in the graduate program and my future plans after graduation. For the purpose of building trust I answered all of these questions as revealing information about me could enable interviewees to trust me. Also, to build trust I discussed my background, mentioning when and why I came to America and how I came to be interested in this topic. Communicating shared backgrounds with interviewees is one of the ways to build trust, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005).

There are several limitations to semi-structured interviews including researcher's biases and participants' discomfort. During the interview, participants may become uncomfortable when questions ask participants to "reveal what they consider 'sensitive information' when the tape recorder is on" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 28). Another issue is researchers' biases; Yin (2003) suggested that researchers remain aware that interviewees may fall victim to biases, poor interviewer recall and participants' poor articulations of response (p. 92). Other unexpected happenings such as participants taking control of the interview, changing the subject or guiding the pace of the interview and implying that the interview was asking the wrong questions or becoming hostile or threatening (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 12) could occur during interviews.

I took several measures to overcome these limitations. First, to ensure the purpose of recording the interview, I explained why the interview was being recorded, who would have access to the recording, as well as how the recording would be kept protected. Also, when some participants seemed to want confirmation or agreement by asking, "right?" or

“you know what I mean?” I would simply nod to reassure them. I would also explain that there were no right or wrong answers to any of the questions posed to them.

In order to lessen my biases toward the interviewees, I was sensitive to several aspects. First, I was aware that my age, gender, educational level, length of stay in America, occupation, and experiences have shaped my perception and biases, and therefore I did not share my perception of the Korean community, social capital, and civic and political engagement with the interviewees. There were a few interviewees who asked for my opinion and perception on political engagement; however, I did not express my perceptions regarding party affiliation and the number of times I participated in political engagement. Also, I tried not to smile or nod my head to participants’ responses so that participants did not feel the need to change their opinion or word choice. I did smile or nod when the topic was neutral and unrelated to the interview protocol. I also paid attention to other nonverbal communication such as posture and hand gestures so that my reactions would not influence the interviewees’ responses. Moreover, because some of my questions involved the interviewees recalling their past behaviors, most participants needed to take their time in recalling the number of times they had done something, for instance, participated in non-electoral or electoral voting. In these cases, I waited until they were ready to provide the answer. Also, afterwards, I asked them again to make sure what they had said was what they had wanted to say. Similarly, to make sure I did not misinterpret the interviewees’ responses, I would rephrase and ask them to make sure I had understood them according to what they had meant. These steps were taken to reduce my biases.

I also engaged in empathy with my interviewees. Rubin and Rubin (2005) recommended that researchers show “caring interest in the content of what the interviewee is saying and the emotion expressed” (p. 81). I engaged in empathy and listened intently to my interviewees’ responses.

At the end of each interview, I explained several things to the interviewees. First, I informed the interviewees that the recordings as well as transcripts would be kept confidential. I also informed the interviewees that my advisor and I would be the only ones who would be reading the transcripts. I also informed them that their contact information would be kept confidential on the researcher’s personal computer. I also informed the interviewees that if there is anything they would like to restate or clarify later, they could always contact me. I also re-explained that their names would remain anonymous and that information the interviewees wanted to keep off record would be honored. I also explained to them their insights would contribute to the body of knowledge on the Korean community, social capital, and civic and political engagement of Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area; one of the interviewees asked if he could receive a final report of the findings.

I began transcribing the recorded interviews after the first interview. I used a complete transcription process to transcribe the first 15 interviews that included verbal placeholders such as “um’s”. For the Korean interviews, I translated the interviews as soon as I had them transcribed. Twenty-five interviews were conducted in Korean (with some English words here and there) and twenty were conducted in English (some included Korean words here and there; most were completely in English). When themes and patterns in the data emerged I used partial transcription for the rest of the interviews.

Partial transcription does not include verbal placeholders and contents that do not correspond to the research questions.

### **Data analysis**

In this research, the grounded theory approach was employed for the data analysis and interpretation. Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory approach seeks to explain and theorize a phenomenon directly from the data. More specifically, it applies a systematic, constant comparison of data throughout the data collection, analysis and interpretation of data instead of waiting until the completion of data collection to start analysis and interpretation. For instance, Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggested that researchers should begin to code the notes, create a list of codes, devise categories and then start the comparison process after one or two interviews, focus groups or participant observations rather than waiting after all the data has come in.

The data analysis process includes open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The open coding is the first step in the data collection and analysis process. At this step, the data are broken down into comprehensible phenomena or categories. Therefore, after about 5 interviews, as patterns begin to emerge, I identified the transcription into categories; here, categories refer to certain topic areas or key words that emerged throughout the data. First few categories were “cultural identity,” “church as community.” As categories emerged, I identified them as descriptive codes, pattern codes or interpretive codes next to the sections of data. These topics and key words helped identify the themes and patterns in the data. Open coding process was employed after each interview after the fifth interview.

The open coding was followed by axial coding. Axial coding is referred to as pattern coding by Miles and Huberman (1994); in this process, topics and categories identified from the open coding are examined to see if there are particular relationships, causal conditions, interpretations and intervening conditions. The purpose of this is to make sense, give direction, and to begin theorizing about the relationships between all the categories and codes. Therefore, in this process multiple smaller phenomena are grouped under a larger category. For instance, with codes and categories, I found in the open coding process such as, “example 1” and “example 2” and “example 3,” that they were grouped into a larger, broader category “examples all combined” to include these types of examples. Throughout axial coding I found that there were cases that did not fit in the broader pattern, while the cases were still one example of the broader category. For these rival explanations, I created another code. For instance, the experiences of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Korean Americans (those who were either born in America or came to America as infants, first language is English and either parents were born in other country) were different from the 1<sup>st</sup> (those who were born in Korea and came to America as an adult; first language is Korean) and the 1.5 generations (those who were born in Korea and came to America as a child or adolescent; speak both English and Korean, the latter being the native language) when it came to their feelings toward the Korean community and churches. So, for these cases, I created another pattern code “2<sup>nd</sup> generations’ perception on Korean churches” to explain how they make meaning of Korean churches.

Then, selective coding was followed by axial coding. Selective coding is “the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and



development” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). Researchers need to engage in the selective coding process to form a coherent, analytical story from the data in order to explain the phenomena under investigation. In order to form a coherent story, Strauss and Corbin recommended an ordering pattern. This ordering pattern should explain how “A (conditions) leads to B (phenomenon), which leads to C (context), which leads to D (action/interaction, including strategies), which then leads to E (consequences)” (p. 124). Following this recommendation, I ordered the pattern codes according to this ordering pattern.

### **Ethical considerations**

Several steps were secured in order to ensure ethical procedure in this research. First, prior to the interviews, I received an approval from the University of Maryland internal review board (IRB) because the study involved interviewing human participants. The IRB ensures the ethical and legal treatment of research participants. The IRB also documents that the study would result in minimal, if any, harm to the participants. Therefore, prior to the beginning of the interview, I explained the purpose and the procedure of the study to the participants and asked them to sign the IRB form. All the participants were also told that in case they are asked to answer questions that may cause discomfort or threaten them, they would have the full right to stop participating in the study. All the participants were also asked to give consent to be audio-taped. Audio-taping interviews were only done for the purpose of accuracy. Once the interviewees gave consent, I recorded the interviews.

Four interviews were not audio-recorded for different reasons. One interviewee expressed that there was no need to record the interview, implying the desire to not be

recorded, and another interviewee verbally told me to turn off the recorder a couple times when he explained what he considered to be “sensitive information.” Excluding these two interviews, one telephone interview and one participant who wanted to type in his answers on the interview protocol, all other interviews were audio-recorded and only I listened to the recordings.

A number of interviewees showed interest and enthusiasm in this research as well as in other research studies related to civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora and asked me to explain the current research findings. When it came to interviewees’ responses in some of the questions, responses differed. Some were very excited to discuss their cultural identity struggles and their political engagement. Yet, others were somewhat embarrassed to discuss their lack of civic and political engagement and their lack of knowledge on these topics. For example, when asked about some of the topics discussed at home and whether or not any of those involved topics related to civic and political engagement, a few parents gave nervous laughs and gave lengthy explanations about their busy schedules. And others apologized to me for not having educated their children in terms of those issues. While I was not in any way asking them to “confess” their “shortcomings” because the interviewees perceived themselves to be “wrong” and me to be “right,” they felt the need to apologize to me. Although I had repeatedly told the interviewees that there were no “right” or “wrong” answers, some of the interviewees must have felt as if I was “checking upon their parenting style.” In forming the interview protocols I did not expect these types of responses from the interviewees. In future studies, I plan to think more about the issue of “face” or “losing

face” or “guilt” in conducting interviews/focus groups with Asian participants so that the interview does not burden them in any predictable ways.

Moreover, I think my position as a graduate student, age and my cultural identity as a Korean American influenced the interview dynamic and interviews. Other than the cultural cues, I recognize that I have had privileges in comparison to some of the interviewees in terms of my educational background. Because of my status, the interviewees may have felt the need to give a “right” answer. At the end of interviews, I often heard interviewees say, “I’m not sure if I did this (the interview) right?” “How did I do?” “Did I do it well?” While the interviewees were told that I was interested in their personal experiences and how they thought about these issues, given my status, I think they felt the need to say what I wanted to hear. Also, to younger participants, my age may have brought unequal balance of power into the interview, also generating the need to say the things I expected to hear rather than telling their own experiences as they saw them. Also, some participants who were older than me wanted to “teach” me and have me “agree” with them what they think about the barriers the Korean community faces when it comes to civic and political engagement as well as the roles of Korean churches and the pastors. In either of the situations, I tried to maintain power balance and the interview dynamic so that the interview process allowed the interviewees to express their concerns and thoughts as freely as possible.

Also, my background and cultural identity as a 1.5 generation Korean American also created a unique dynamic in interviews. As I understand both cultures (Korean and American) the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewees seemed comfortable talking about their concerns as they felt that we both shared common ground and experiences (i.e., growing

up in America) and the 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees seemed to feel comfortable talking about their experiences as they felt that I was Korean-enough to understand their perspectives. Hence, my background, educational level, and age had advantages as well as disadvantages in conducting interviews with members of the Korean diaspora.

### **Researcher reflection and evaluation**

I am aware that my educational and personal background has biased how I conducted my research, analyzed the data and interpreted my findings. My personal experiences as part of the Korean diaspora living in America has greatly influenced me as to how I conducted this research regarding the Korean diaspora, Korean community and the Korean diaspora's civic and political engagement. I was born in Korea and came to the United States when I was 12 years old; I attended middle and high school in a small suburb in Michigan, then I received my undergraduate degree in Nanjing China, then I came back to America for my graduate degrees. When my family first came to America, we received much help from a Korean church in Michigan (e.g., enrolling to schools, receiving social security numbers, purchasing a car). Since then, wherever I went, I established and maintained strong attachment to Korean communities in both America and China (e.g., Kalamazoo, Lansing, Los Angeles, the Washington, DC, area, and Nanjing, Beijing).

There were several reasons for this attachment: first, my native language is Korean and because my family is very conservative, I am at ease when connected with the Korean culture, and second, church has been a large part of my life; hence, church involvement naturally lead to strong connection to the larger Korean community. And over the years, I came to recognize several phenomena within Korean communities.

Third, Korean diasporas that I observed in several cities in a couple of countries seemed to live as “second citizens.” While members of Korean diaspora retain their culture and language and ways of doing things Korean way, these activities were always within Korean social enclaves, marginalized from the mainstream. According to personal observation and understanding, this trend continues for the majority of the second generation. As I come from the middle class and have highly educated parents (e.g., both parents hold PhD degrees) who discuss politics much at home, I became more aware of non-political trends within Korean communities in America. Although I have now resided in America for almost 18 years, I have come to realize how uninformed I have been with civic and political engagement in America. Due to my legal status, I have always been more interested in Korean politics in Korea; however, witnessing my Korean friends who are American citizens prompted me to investigate how new faces of Americans live as second citizens in terms of civic and political engagement.

Fourth, I came to be more sensitive to the directions of Korean community. In relation to the first point, because I am aware of the emerging problems within Korean communities (e.g., miscommunications between the 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents and the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation children; language and cultural barriers 1<sup>st</sup> generations face; cultural identity struggles and religious issues 2<sup>nd</sup> generations face), I share the concerns Korean leaderships hold concerning the future of Korean communities. I personally feel that understanding factors that encourage and inhibit civic and political engagement could resolve a part of larger issues Korean communities face today. Also, findings of the study could help Korean communities navigate their way toward smoother assimilation and also contribute to the strengthening of democracy in America.

Therefore, the purpose of this research was to examine how members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of their communities, their resources in the community, and their thoughts and actions in civic and political activities. Its aim was to describe and explain their stories in their voices by using an exploratory approach rather than just to test a theory. Therefore, I used “meaning-making” to get a better understanding of their perspectives on social capital, civic and political engagement, using their words. As reality is socially constructed through social interactions and conversations, according to the social construction of reality theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), the best way to capture how members of the Korean diaspora have created their meanings on the concepts under examination in this research, through conversations and interactions with others, I used the term meaning-making in the research questions and interview protocols. Moreover, as the qualitative research permits us to examine the “how” and “why” in the participants’ own voices, it was an appropriate term to use in questioning the interviewees.

I applied my knowledge, expertise, and understanding of the Korean diaspora in the process of collecting and analyzing the data. In collecting the data, I tried to conduct interviews according to the cultural practices of the participants. In the process of analyzing the data, I am aware of my emotions, thoughts, knowledge, experiences, personal biases, and other factors influenced the way I interpreted the data.

Therefore, I tried to limit these influences by taking caution and mindful actions in analyzing the data as well as try to use analysis methods to stay as objective and unbiased as possible. I acknowledge possible misinterpretations led by assumptions set prior to engaging in data collection and analysis processes. To minimize these limitations,

I consistently questioned the validity of the interpretations and addressed assumptions that I have in the discussion section of the study. I took memos of personal biases throughout the data collection and analysis processes so that I can thoroughly identify my biases that might influence the interpretation of the data.

I was also cautious of how my sex (female), age (32), race (Asian), ethnicity (Korean), upbringing (Seoul, Korea; Kalamazoo, Michigan; Nanjing, China) and religion (Christian), education (hold a graduate degree), class (middle class), sexuality (heterosexual), marital status (single), political status (Republican) would intersect with the interviewees' identities. In order to better understand how more about my intersectional identifies, I read *Yisei* (a student-written literary publication from Harvard's Asian-American community) to better understand struggles 2<sup>nd</sup> generations face, *Hyphen: Asian American unabridged* (a magazine that addresses young Asian Americans struggles in America), and Sonia Ryang's (2008) *Writing selves in diaspora: Ethnography of autobiographies of Korean women in Japan and the United States*.

By reading the autobiographies, I was able to gain in-depth understanding of my identity by comparing my experience of living in America with those individuals in the book. I also journeyed and thought much about my identity, religious and relationship struggles I have had in the past so that I could trace the evolution of my biases. Through these steps, I was able to understand how my interest in the Korean diaspora's struggle originated from my personal struggles and invisible oppression and discriminations I have encountered living as a second citizen in both America and China, and now in Korea as well (Koreans in Korea do not perceive me as "one of them").

I realized that because of my nomadic-like past, I have developed a self that does not belong in any place, yet is quickly adaptable to any place. I have also come to realize where I have my church, social capital and places where I can exercise civic and political engagement is where I belong. Knowing where I stand on these issues I was careful not to bring these ideas and thought into the interviews. Rather, with this understanding, I tried to not to skew my literature review and my interpretations so that the findings of this study do not become evidence to support what I believe, but what the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area think and perceive in their own ways. Therefore, the themes in this research are what emerged from the data, which were expressed consistently by the interviewees.

### **Researcher reflection**

In order to identify my personal biases and also to systematically process data collection, coding and analysis process, I employed memos and observer comments (OCs). Memos are notes written by the researcher regarding any themes, ideas, or issues regarding research throughout the data collection, coding and analysis process. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) memos could be written on what is puzzling, as alternative hypotheses in response to another memo, to propose a new pattern code, to integrate a set of marginal remarks made on field notes, when analysis does not have a clear concept in mind but is struggling to do it, when there is a general theme or metaphor that brings together discrete observation. Therefore, I wrote memos during the interviews on my notepads and later on my computer. I also wrote memos to remember interviewees' nonverbal body movements; for instance, I wrote memos when what interviewees said were contrary to their nonverbal gestures (e.g., saying yes but with nervous laughs or



sarcastic tones) so that I could recall those instances and analyze the transcripts without misinterpretations. During the data analysis process, I wrote memos on the printed transcripts and separate pieces of paper to keep track of these thoughts for clarifying questions and developing concepts and themes.

I also used observer comments (OCs) during the data transcription and analysis process. OCs include reflection of the observer's feelings, reactions and reflections about what has been observed. It also contains insights, interpretations, and working hypotheses about what is happening in the setting (Bogdan & Biklen 1998; Patton, 2002). During the interviews, I wrote OCs on my notepads to record my feelings and thoughts about the interview and the interviewee's comments. After the interviews, while driving back, I often audio-recorded my thoughts and feelings so that I would not forget the intensity and the details of my feelings on that particular interview. For instance, after interviewing a deacon I personally knew for a few years, I audio-recorded my thoughts and interpretations on a few comments he had said in the interview, just to make sure my thoughts on him prior to the interview do not lead to biased interpretation of what he has said in the interview. During the data analysis process, I bracketed (Denzin, 1989) my observer comments so that my interpretations were distinct from what I felt during the interview process. For instance, I tried to reduce my biases by journaling my biases toward members of the Korean diaspora who differed from me in terms of age, educational level, language preference, religious and political affiliation, occupation, legal status, and marital status. I also attempted to bracket my biases so that the analysis was rendered as accurately as possible.

## **Evaluation**

Despite the need to distinguish between personal feelings and the data and participants, researchers can face difficult relationships with participants or become too sensitive to the subject and research sites. Lee-Treweek and Linkogle (2000) suggested that researchers have support groups as qualitative researchers conduct research. In order to minimize these sensitive issues, I often engaged in discussion and sought constructive criticism from my colleagues and friends. While discussing my research topic, a couple of friends raised an important question: “So many Koreans in America, especially in this area, have already become successful, why do they need to be active in terms of civic and political engagement?” Their rationale was, given the socioeconomic success of Korean Americans, what is the core reason for political activities, especially if they do not feel any need to be vocal in these ways. This prompted me to realize that the issues under investigation hardly get noticed to an average member of the Korean diaspora in their everyday life.

However, I soon realized that just because it was not of concern does not imply it is unimportant today or in the near future to the Korean diaspora. Moreover, hearing the question from successful friends also prompted me to realize the need to make this an important issue for the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area, as the conversation only underscored lack of active engagement on these aspects in the area. Discussion with my friends helped me realize how much research on these issues has been underestimated by the members of the Korean diaspora themselves. Discussion with my colleagues helped me also realize how non-Korean Americans stress the importance of these issues and the importance of investigating the intersections of ethnicity, social capital, and civic

and political engagement. The discussions enriched this research process and helped me separate my personal feelings from the actual data.

Also, I discussed my interpretations of the data collected with colleagues who would check for unbiased interpretation. In these ways, I consistently engaged in self-reflexivity to “explore the ways in which a researcher’s involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research” (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228), and these specific tactics helped reduce biases and strengthen the interpretation of the data.

Ultimately, this study is a product of my interpretation. In this dissertation as well as in the final document for publication in academic journals, I will demonstrate my accountability as a researcher to my research subjects and the readerships. My understanding of the phenomena, interpretations of findings and practical implications to enhance use of social capital as well as civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area through communication practices, will reveal the importance of civic and political engagements as well as societal implications of issues the Korean diaspora’s face. This dissertation also suggests ways for the Korean diaspora to strengthen communication practices and make better use of social capital and activate the momentum for greater civic and political engagement to empower themselves.

### **Validity**

Validity was reached in several ways in this study. Validity refers to a getting at the “truths” of phenomena and there can be several rather than a single, verifiable “truth.” In qualitative research, validity refers to the quality or rigor of the study. This is because in qualitative research, “a world [consists] of multiple, constructed realities [that] do not

permit the researcher to identify any single representation as the criterion for accurate measurement...and because the inquirer operates reflexively as a participant, it is doubtful whether the usual way of conceiving internal validity has much relevance (Lindlof, 1995, p. 238). Therefore, rather than getting at a single “truth,” the goal of qualitative research is to get at the realities and “truths” as the participants perceive them, as rigorously as possible. Moreover, as Bauman suggested that liquid modernity, as opposed to solid modernity, was not lenient with the different ones, and that we need to be flexible and fluid in our meanings in this ever changing, fragile society (Bauman, 2003). As today’s social forms and institutions are “liquid” as in constantly shifting and changing, Bauman suggested that individuals also must act and plan actions to fit in the condition of uncertainty. According to Bauman, as the society and social reality is fluid and shifting, it is appropriate to use qualitative research methods to understand the participants’ ‘trust’ and ‘reality’ as they have constructed them. Therefore, I examined how the Korean diaspora made meaning of Korean communities, social capital, civic and political engagement from their own experiences and realities rather than trying to find one single “truth” about these issues.

There are several ways in which the rigor of qualitative research could be secured. First, lengthy engagement in the field, triangulation, peer review, negative case analysis, clarification of the researcher’s own biases, member check, thick, rich description, and external audits are suggested techniques (Creswell, 1998, pp. 201-203). These techniques improve the rigor of a study as they help a researcher to evaluate her biases, improve research techniques, and to evaluate and improve data collection and analysis process.

Also, these techniques help researchers remain transparent throughout the research process.

According to Kvale (1995), validity is measured in three ways: craftsmanship, communication and action. Craftsmanship refers to well-thought-out research design and the credibility of the researcher. Craftsmanship involves “continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings” (Kvale, 1995, p. 27). A well-crafted study is to stand the test of time and weather attempts to falsify it. He further adds that “validity is ascertained by examining the sources of invalidity and the stronger the attempts to falsification a proposition has survived, the more valid and the more trustworthy the knowledge” (p. 26). Following Kvale’s suggestions, I designed the study so that it is grounded in theory, proposed questions that investigate previously underexplored areas, developed questions that answers the research questions, repeatedly examined the transcribed data, was mindful of the memos and OCs, and interpreted the data using grounded theory approach and engaged in external audit as well as extensive self-reflexivity to find “truths” from the data.

Kvale (1995) also emphasized the communication aspect. “Communicative validity involves testing the validity of knowledge claims in a dialogue” (p. 30) and this can be reached by other scholars and professionals in the research field. To achieve this validity, I sought out constructive criticism from colleagues. Also, conference papers I have submitted with current findings have been accepted to an international communication conference and several blind reviewers gave constructive criticism as well as positive feedback on my interpretations of the study’s findings. I have

incorporated their feedback into the final version of this research to strengthen my study design and interpretations.

In terms of practicality, Kvale (1995) stated that “pragmatic validity involves the ethical dimension. It represents a stronger knowledge claim than a mere agreement through a dialogue. A pragmatic validity rests upon observations and interpretations, with a commitment to act upon interpretation. Actions speak louder than words” (p. 33). Following his suggestions, I have already strengthened the pragmatic validity by submitting portions of this study to the professional community. I also plan on achieving the pragmatic validity by publishing my research to academic journals. It is my expectation that pragmatic validity will be gained when the lawmakers, Korean American politicians, Korean communities and Korean churches will begin to recognize under-representation of the Korean diaspora’s civic and political engagement and collaborate to practically strengthen their engagements.

### **Reliability and generalizability**

Babbie defined that for quantitative studies, reliability is another standard in which a research study can be judged for its quality. Research is shown to have reached reliability if other researchers using the same technique yield the same result each time (Babbie, 2001). However, Stenbacka (2001) further argued that “the concept of reliability is irrelevant and even misleading in qualitative research” (p. 552). Scholars suggest, rather than reliability, qualitative researchers should use terms such as credibility, confirmability, or transferability to assess quality of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, Babbie (2001) has argued that because every researcher has different biases and points of view, observations, analysis and interpretations are bound

to be different (p. 299). Therefore, for qualitative researchers, Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggested that reliability can be improved if the researcher is aware of his or her biases and assumptions that influence the data collection and analysis. Hence, as suggested by Corbin and Strauss, I tried to reduce my biases and assumptions as much as possible in this study, however, I do agree, despite my efforts to improve the reliability of this research, I could not remove my biases and judgments when it came to data interpretation. The findings of the study are transferable but only to those who share similar experiences with the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area (e.g., not generally to Koreans who are in rural areas far away from a large metropolitan city). However, I believe the principles and relationships between key terms and themes could be applicable in understanding other diasporic groups who share similarities with the participants examined.

### **Methodological Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. First, as addressed above, my experiences and biases have influenced sampling, data collection, analysis, and presentation process. In terms of sampling, because of the limited resources (e.g., time and funding) I recruited participants from my personal contacts. Therefore, despite my efforts, some participants share similarities with me in terms of age, sexuality [heterosexual], socio economic status [middle class], political views [Republican], experience and duration of stay in the United States. Also, the relationship I have with my participants may have encouraged or discouraged the extent to which they revealed their experiences to me. Nevertheless, I made an effort to find people whom I did not know through friends' or acquaintances' introductions.

However, because Koreans are more likely to help someone in their personal networks, it was very difficult to ask someone to participate in an interview through cold calls. Lee (2011) also recognized that Korean communities are tight and member exclusive, hence, making it difficult to find access to the community for research purposes. Almost all the interviews were only feasible through my friends' introduction; only a few agreed to participate without personally knowing me or hearing something about me through their acquaintances (e.g., non-profit organizations). Although past relationships with participants may have influenced the data, without prior relationship, I may not have been able to interview these participants at all.

However, I think what the respondents said was not influenced by the relationship, as I did not show agreement or disagreement with the participants and also as I did not discuss these issues with the participants in the past for them to know how I think about the issues discussed in the interview. Hence, because they did not know what I expected to hear, I do not think their answers were influenced by the relationships. I tried to reach maximum variation through my personal network, however, and ultimately, the dissertation sample was not as diverse as I had intended (e.g., sample does not include 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Korean Americans, those in multiracial marriage, biracial individuals, and Korean descent adoptees).

Another limitation would be in the data analysis process due to my background and training. My age, student status and religion (and others) as well as my biases have influenced and perhaps limited the data analysis process. Also, because of the cultural norm, I did not conduct a member check after the interviews. While I always asked for clarification, elaboration and asked them to repeat themselves to see if I had understood



them correctly, because the member check could be considered too much of a hassle or unprofessional, I purposely did not conduct a member check. Also, when discussing the Korean Associations in America, as some did not elaborate on their perception as they thought it wasn't appropriate to "badmouth" politicians, I did not further probe their perceptions unless they, upon their discretion, elaborated. I also did not probe much on the language and cultural barriers the participants' experiences, as they might feel embarrassed or ashamed. In future research, questions concerning their language and cultural barriers and the degree to which these barriers influence political engagement could be done using surveys so that they could "save face."

All in all, this study is to illustrate how the Korean diaspora communicates, creates opportunities for social capital and uses social capital in the process of civic and political engagement. I hope the findings of this research can reveal the unique experiences of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area and prompt active engagement on the Korean communities around the United States, empower themselves, so that the next generation of the Korean diaspora could become better citizens in America.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

### **Research Question 1**

***RQ1: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of their community?***

Members of the Korean diaspora made meaning of their ethnic community in relation to ethnic identity; there were varying perceptions of the Korean community, drawbacks of the Korean community, and the reasons to keep the Korean community

varied depending on the generations. Specific evidence for each of these themes is discussed below.

*The make-up of cultural identity in the ethnic community*

How Koreans make meaning of their ethnic community seemed strongly related to their cultural identity, that is, how they perceive themselves (e.g., American, Korean-American, Korean) in terms of cultural identity. Here, the interviews revealed a mutual exchange between cultural identity and how they make meaning of the ethnic community. In other words, their cultural identity seemed to have been influenced by their familiarity/knowledge of the Korean culture and the language (the more they were instilled with Korean values, the more they seemed to be attached to and appreciate Korean community) and the Korean community reinforced their cultural identity.

First and foremost, Koreans living in the DC area can be largely divided into three distinct groups; the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5, and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. This division is mostly influenced by the individual's place of birth, native language, and familiarity with the values and cultures; although other factors such as duration of stay in the United States, individual personality, place of residence in the States, and the degree of their parents' assimilation in American society could influence their identities.

The first generation refers to individuals who came to America as adults; they identify themselves as Koreans. They are also referred to as FOB, that is, "fresh off the boat," as they remain strongly attached to their native language and culture while living in America. Some individuals maintain their culture due to personal preference despite the length of stay in America, and some assimilate into the host culture after a number of years. However, a majority of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation, despite their familiarity with the

American culture, still identified themselves as Koreans and had strong affiliations with Korean culture and values.

The second group is the 1.5 generation. Individuals who fall into this category came to the United States when they were adolescents. These individuals, because they came mostly in their teens, identified themselves as the 1.5 generation, a generation between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. These individuals are comfortable speaking both Korean and English and are familiar with the values and cultures of both countries. Yet, most are still more familiar with Korean culture and language; these individuals identify themselves culturally as Korean Americans.

The individuals who are categorized into the third group, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, are individuals who were born in America. These individuals are much more familiar with American ways of doing things and identify themselves as Americans or Korean Americans. Although they are still attached to the Korean community because their parents are closely connected to a Korean community, their Korean language skills and cultural knowledge are poor and their ways of doing things are very much Americanized. Because of their American ways of doing things, they are often referred to as “twinkies” that is white on the inside and yellow on the outside. Although on the outside, they are Koreans, inside, they are very much Americans. Although there are exceptional cases at the individual level, this big generalization is widely accepted in the Korean community and interviewees themselves, referred to themselves as 1.5 generation or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.

When asked how the interviewees perceived the Korean community, the answers varied. However, in discussing their perception on Korean community, a number of 1.5 generations began to discuss their cultural identity and the struggles they experienced.

Those who came at a young age or those who were born in America especially seemed to have struggled with their cultural identity more than the 1<sup>st</sup> generation.

One participant in her 40s, who came when she was 5 years old, said that she came to terms with her cultural identity during her childhood.

I consider myself a Korean American. I'd like to hold on to my Korean culture but I consider myself a Korean American. I don't think I struggled with my identity...there was some teasing but after middle school I began to be comfortable with the culture. I think it was a gradual process living in the States having the Korean culture and accepting American culture and coming together. I have to speak both languages and I have to be among two cultures to feel comfortable and to say that I am who I am.

As explained, while she experienced some tension growing up, she has learned to juggle the two cultures and appreciate and embrace both American and Korean cultures. However, for others, thoughts on cultural identity came a little later and took more intense internal struggle to find some balance. Another interviewee, a 24-year-old, who came to America with her family when she was in high school, explained how her real struggle with her identity did not emerge until after she graduated from college.

I didn't know why I had to live here. I really didn't like it here and as a Korean...I came when I was really young so it didn't feel like I was a Korean either so I was confused...and because I didn't like it here I distanced myself from everything...without me really realizing [it]. I thought I was very different and that's why I thought I only belonged to the 1.5 group. And I kept thinking it wasn't meant for me to come here [to America] because I was neither Korean nor

American. I had no interest in this society...and on the back of my mind I always thought I could go back.

Though the internal conflict was always there, it did not come out in full force until much later. Even after living in America for 6-7 years, she still did not feel comfortable with the American culture. However, because she lived with her family and hung out with Korean friends, she was able to maintain Korean culture and values to her comfort. However, when she began to struggle academically in nursing school she began to question her cultural identity more seriously. She discussed how academic struggle and thoughts on her future career prompted her to spend several months contemplating her cultural identity. What complicated the process even more was her citizenship. She had always thought she could go back to Korea; however, after acquiring her American citizenship, going back did not seem that easy. Therefore, her Korean identity, and American citizenship as well as future uncertainties troubled her greatly.

The process of finding one's cultural identity was not about selecting one or the other. "I'm not concerned about selecting one between the two cultures...I don't think that's the solution. I don't think it's bad living as a Korean American. I think I have a unique background because I'm from Korea currently living in America. I like it." This interviewee came to America when she was in high school and has lived in America for over 10 years. After over a decade, she has come to appreciate both cultures and find a balance between the two cultures. Many agreed on the importance of finding a "balance" between Korean and American cultures.

However, in finding this balance, interviews frequently used the term "betweenness." The term betweenness seemed to imply that they were "stuck" in-between

the two cultures, being neither Korean nor American and still not being able to make peace in-between the two cultures. “I feel like I’m neither fully Korean nor fully American” were frequent phrases used by young participants. This phrase resonated amongst 1.5 generations more than 1<sup>st</sup> generation or the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations. One 1.5 generation spoke, “I’ve lost so much of my Korean...and my English isn’t that good either.” Such comments showed that while they may have been privileged to know both Korean and American cultures and languages, their sense of belonging may have weakened because they are neither completely Korean nor completely American.

While some struggled to find where they belonged, others felt it was not so much of what they were comfortable with, but more of whom they needed to be. One interviewee in his mid-thirties, talked about how he thought about who he needed to be if he were to continue to live in America. Having lived in a mid-west state during his youth, he had faced blatant discrimination because of his race and broken English. “I don’t think I was confused per se [about my cultural identity], but in planning for the future, I thought about what would bring the most convenience to me....”

Because he was not sure where his work would lead him and his family, he discussed how he thought about shaping himself in terms of his personality or ways of doing things to better fit in a given society. Perhaps due to his experiences in racial discrimination and his current status as a father and a husband, he seemed to want to be very strategic in reducing potential discomfort while living in America. As such, some individuals had to shape themselves to be the persons whom they needed to be.

Yet, for others, official documents helped to shape one's cultural identity. A woman in her early thirties who has lived in America for over a decade spoke about how her identity changed suddenly as she received her citizenship.

I've always thought about it [cultural identity]. I think I'll think about it as long as I live. It's not like I think about it because I want to but because the thoughts just come to me. Am I Korean or American? When I had the greencard I didn't think much but once I became a citizen, my thoughts began to change. I'm now beginning to think this is my country.

Her response shows how her identity was shaped by her U.S. citizenship and the changed identity gave her a new sense of belonging, making her more conscious of her relationship between herself, America, and Korea and where she lies between the different terrains.

For some, this question of cultural identity was a very serious issue; to others, it was a simple answer. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, when asked to say what her cultural identity was, simply answered, "Korean American" because "I was born here." Her cultural identity was defined by her place of birth and it was as simple as that. Another 1.5 generation said, "I just happen to be here and I happen to come from Korea. [cultural identity] or me being a Korean American is nothing fancy." She also added how she has adjusted to life in America and how comfortable she is living in Virginia.

While interviews gave similar definition of "Korean American", that is, individuals living as Americans with Korean heritage. Their stories were not simple; the struggles were complicated with language, age, gender, core values, legal status and other personal experiences. And their personal stories varied. However, the interviews revealed

that how individuals made meaning of their cultural identities was related to how they perceived the Korean culture and the Korean community.

### *Varying perception of the Korean community*

Interviewees discussed how this term community was strongly related to how much they felt that they belonged in it. In other words, if they had a strong sense of belonging, regardless of the size of their church, the church became their core community. Interviewees felt this way also because their churches provided the things that they thought a community should provide, such as, protection, loyalty, friendship and accountability. Interviewees felt that their Korean church provided these aspects.

One interviewee who has lived in a Koreatown on the West Coast for a long time discussed how she did not feel like she belonged there, even though she lived there for about 8 years. But, after she came to a college on the East Coast, she found a church, and although she has been a member of this new church for just over a year, she explained how she has a strong sense of belonging. She said, "I think you need to have a role or responsibilities to feel like you are a part of a community." In just over a year, she had already been on a missionary trip to South America, and had been involved in several ministries at her church that appreciated her skills. Not only had her responsibilities strengthened her sense of belonging, but appreciations and recognition of her talents had also strengthened her sense of belonging.

How the first generation perceived the Korean community was much different from the 1.5 generation. The first generation seemed to perceive the Korean community as one that encompasses a much larger population and locales; that which includes a Koreatown in Virginia, all Korean churches in the greater Washington, DC, area as well



as other smaller Korean social enclaves where Koreans reside and carry businesses. In interviewing the 1<sup>st</sup> generation, I often heard “this whole area” or the “Washington, DC, area” in reference to their community. Perhaps because the first generations have larger network or more business partners, they seemed to think more broadly.

The first generations also seemed to have much pride in the Korean community. One respondent stated,

I think this community in the Greater Washington, DC, area is so much more dynamic and diverse than other Korean towns such as New York and Los Angeles. I haven't been to all Korean communities in America, but based on my experiences, I've noticed that the educational level of Koreans in this area is much higher than others and this Korean community has much energy and exchanges between generations.

A number of 1<sup>st</sup> generations discussed how energetic and dynamic this Korean community was compared to others and suggested the reason may be because of its location; being near Washington, DC. Another respondent said, “I think Korean communities in the DC area are really convenient; it has everything I need...[Korean] bakery, church, bookstore, restaurants...I really enjoy what they have to offer here.” Another also spoke how “the standard of living” is relatively high compared to other places she has been to because of so many reasons, such as Korean venues and the type of people who come to live in the area. As such a number of 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees spoke positively and enthusiastically about the Korean community in the DC area.

Also, sense of sharing was important. For the newly immigrated Koreans, not being able to speak the language of the host county presents a number of barriers;

therefore, being in a place with people who share the same language and culture is a big comfort. Further, even though the church may not provide everything that they expect (e.g., loyalty, friendship), they nevertheless become strongly attached to churches.

Interviews revealed that the most important common ground for the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 1.5 generation Koreans are their ethnicity, language and the culture. One interviewee said, “I think I’m comforted when I’m with other Koreans...I don’t think you can disregard ethnicity. Well at least I think so. I’m not trying to bring segregation...but I can’t help it. I really wouldn’t want that but it just feels natural [to be around them]...” One of the interviewees who had been teaching at an elementary school for several years said that even though all of her coworkers are friendly, she doesn’t consider them as her friends. She discussed how her foreignness emerges daily as the others talk about movies, TV shows, and musicians that they grew up with. As she is unfamiliar with those topics, she often feels left out of the conversation. She also doesn’t want others to explain, as her unfamiliarity only becomes more salient. Therefore, after attending an American church for four years she found a Korean church where she could meet people like her.

Because we [my Korean friends and I] came to the States to study at similar age, so we’ve experience similar issues such as the language barrier, so when we talk about those things I’m encouraged and that really brings comfort. Plus, because we have similar experiences we know what others are saying, there is no need for explanation...we just know.

As such, importance of having common grounds in terms of language and culture resonated from Korean speaking interviewees.

The responses from the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations were much different from those of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. First, while majority of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generations were affiliated with Korean churches in the area, some 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewees were not, and therefore, when they were asked about Korean communities the answers varied. One interviewee said, “I don’t know for me when I think about Korean community I think of *ajummas* [married women] gossiping...his daughter did this...she did that...when I think of Korean community. I know it’s bad but that’s my first impression...a lot of people do that...you know...” As such, this respondent expressed her negative impression of Koreans in general.

Other 2<sup>nd</sup> generations also stated, “There are also people [Koreans] who don’t feel the need to adapt to the American society...they want to go back to their roots and not learn English...and keep speaking Korean with their clique...” another said, “Some elders at my church do not speak a word of English, they have been here [in America] for twenty years...why don’t they learn?” while this interviewee seemed frustrated at his elders of his church due to language barriers, others seemed to be upset by the “segregations” Koreans themselves were creating in America. For instance, a second generation expressed how she doesn’t agree with Koreans socializing with only Koreans. “I think there are two different groups, one that always like to hang out with Korean people rather than trying to fit into the rest of the society and the other that interacts with other people. [the second group] I like.” This interviewee was not affiliated to any Korean organization on her college campus even though her mother was a very active person in the Korean community.

A number of second generations did not seem to have positive feelings toward other Koreans. Therefore, even before asking what they thought about Korean

communities, many discussed how much they disagree with the ways 1<sup>st</sup> generations do things; that is, in Korean ways and not in American ways as they are “suppose” to since they are in America.

When it came to their thoughts on the Korean community, answers varied. One participant who identified himself as a 1.7 generation (not so Americanized as the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation and not so Koreanized as 1.5 generation) stated how the Korean community is a just one of many communities he belonged to,

I belong to many...community at where I work, as engineers, as federal employees I see a community there...I see community in a city or town I live in...when we have crime we talk to neighbors to each other...so for me, I think of community as a loose term...I think of it as any group of people or entity I think of them as a community so I have a community everywhere pretty much.

To him, the Korean community is one of many communities that he belongs to.

Yet, there was a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation who said how his community is his church. “My father is a pastor and our church is pretty small. So, whenever I think of Korean community I think of our church.” Because his church is small, he is responsible for multiple tasks such as translating documents for his parents and helping his parents do other church related works.

Yet another 2<sup>nd</sup> generation described the Korean community as a very abstract and invisible community. “Korean community comes together if something happens...like the world cup and Olympics ... people like to take care of themselves first before others so and Koreans are competitive so they like to do their own thing...” He discussed how he only feels presence of a community occasionally. He further mentioned,

When the Virginia Tech [shootings] happened...they [Koreans] got together and they thought that it was bad...and that doesn't represent Korean people....they wanted Koreans to be represented as contributor not killers so when things like that happen then it does affect you because you are Korean then, yes, we do have a community. But other than that, for smaller issues....I think people are like...that not big of a concern [about a community].

To him, the Korean community is concerned about creating a positive image and comes together occasionally on the basis of need and issues.

As such, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewees seemed to have varying perceptions of the Korean community and much of that perception seemed to have been shaped by personal experiences and contact. Therefore, how they made meaning of the Korean community was somewhat narrower, less positive and different from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generations.

Some of their negative perceptions of the Korean community were found to have stemmed from experiences from Korean churches due to language and cultural barriers. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation discussed why she switched to an American church after having attended Korean churches all of her life. "I miss the food and the people there [previous church] but with Korean church was more about "so what are you having for dinner?" with American church it's less about your daily life...our conversation is more about, "So what's happening with your spiritual life?"; it's not that daily life is not important but that's not the focus." This person discussed how she feels more supported spiritually in the American church. Therefore, despite her personal attachment and advantages of Korean church (i.e., Korean language classes for her children, Korean food and circle of

church friends) her family of eight decided to make the change for the spiritual growth of her family members.

Another discussed how he experienced disrespect from his church members. Growing up primarily in all-American schools, he did not have much exposure to Korean language and opportunities to learn Korean. Because of that, he feels his Korean is weaker than his other 2<sup>nd</sup> generation friends. He discussed how the Korean speaking members of his church do not bother to consider English-speaking members. He said, “I don’t understand why the first generations don’t learn to speak English.” He further discussed how he did not want to learn Korean anymore. While he still attends a church that predominately uses Korean, his circle of friends were mostly 2<sup>nd</sup> generations.

A larger issue second-generation Korean Americans face was from members of Korean churches doing things Korean-way. For instance, the need to be submissive to the elders at church even when the elders were not necessary correct about an issue at hand, was identified as a Korean-way of doing things. “I think Koreans are too Korean-centric, they are too proud...their ways of doing things or what they think is right is just too strong.” When asked to give an example, he was not able to recall specific incidences; however, what he experienced left him strong impression of how Koreans do things. When asked to describe what he did in response to their Korean-ways of doing things, he mumbled, “you know” and shrugged his shoulders and didn’t quite finish the sentence. His weak resistance to the 1<sup>st</sup> generation may have derived from Korean values such as respecting the elders.

On respect, one 2<sup>nd</sup> generation said,

I feel like a lot of it [Korean culture] has to do with respect; it's very different compared to the generation before me and after me; a lot of my friends who are older take that into consideration whereas I don't really know that much....my younger sister doesn't know anything about it so I have to teach her....so there is a lot of that factor...and my parents have instilled in that to me a lot...like bowing...stuff like that. So when distant relatives come they know that I don't really know that much so they understand...but I do what I know.

Although she was young and not very familiar with Korean culture and values, she seemed to understand what is appropriate and acceptable and what is not. As such, the interviewee above may have accepted the status quo of his church members because he did not think objecting the elders would be inappropriate, thus, treading unfamiliar territories.

Interviews revealed that the ways in which 2<sup>nd</sup> generation perceived their community was much different than the ways 1<sup>st</sup> or 1.5 generations perceived the Korean community. While the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generations primarily considered their Korean community as churches and broadly, anywhere Koreans were associated with, 2<sup>nd</sup> generations' perceptions of the Korean community were directly related to their personal experiences. Also, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations' feelings toward Korean communities were not always positive or optimistic. One of the reasons was due to their unfamiliarity with Korean cultures and language; because they were treading unfamiliar territories, they were more likely to have misunderstandings and confusion. However, rather than being explained why they had to do certain things Korean-ways, interviewees seemed to show that in some cases they had no choice but to conform. Therefore, past resentments or

misunderstanding left them with less than positive feelings toward the Korean community in general and 1<sup>st</sup> generation in specific.

### *Drawbacks of the Korean community*

In-depth examination of the Korean community revealed that while Korean communities play a pivotal role in providing the space for socialization, it is a double-edged sword as it brings many limitations. Korean churches were found to hold a number of activities and services throughout the week. For instance, one church had various weekly (e.g., weekly Bible study groups, Friday night service, Sunday main service, Korean school) and daily services (e.g., daily dawn prayer service).

Although not everyone was required to attend all services throughout the week, members in leadership positions were somewhat obligated to attend a majority of the services. One interviewee who has been serving his church in various ways said, “I’ve provided a number of services to my church...offering, serving in the ministry and people who come to church. I’ve served as parking lot attendant, I’ve done officials, multimedia, I’ve provided guidance to mentorship to younger kids...” Over ten years, he has been involved in a number of services, each for a long term. When asked what else he did other than his church activities, he said, “honestly I never had the time. I was engaged in one local engagement for such a long time...and before that I was in high school and I didn’t do much beyond the confines of school.” Therefore, while he had many opportunities to learn and develop different skills (e.g., mentoring, organizing) he shared his reluctance in not having had opportunities to explore other areas outside of church.

Interviews with others also revealed similar stories. One interviewee who has been attending her church for over 15 years said she does not have time to meet other



people. To meet the needs of her work, family and church she rarely has time to meet people outside of her church. Another interviewee who was also active in her ministry also discussed how she left the ministry to tend for her children and busy work. “I tried to go back and I want to but really I can’t seem to find the time. And it [previous ministry] being so demanding, I don’t think I can do it all.” Therefore a number of interviewees discussed how demanding church-related work could be in terms of time and difficult it is to balance with other work.

Despite the long affiliation with their church, some were not interested in getting more involved beyond certain point. One deaconess, who considers her church her second home and had been teaching her children as such, discussed how she wants to maintain a certain distance with members of her church. Although she is strongly attached to her church and the people she is well aware of all the “talk” that goes around behind closed doors. She spoke of the “dangers” of becoming too close to other members. She reasoned,

Once I went to a grocery store and someone approached me and ask if I’m a Deaconess. She was a total stranger but she acted as if she knew me well. She also asked if I’m from the A church. There are only a few groceries I can shop at and I can’t exchange fruits even if I want to because too many people know me.

As changing bad fruits could be shown as picky, she further explains how she is careful of other things.

She also discussed how strangers were interested in her family. She said, People know more about my family than I do...it’s such a small network here...sometimes it’s better to not know certain things. There is nothing new

because everyone knows everything so well. So in Korean community you just have to be careful of everything. I even tell my son not to go to the mall. Because I know how he acts around me is different from the way he acts with his friends. So I tell him these things. You never know what the pastor will hear.

Her son had actually gone to a mall with his friends and a few days later she found out someone had told the church youth pastor. Even though the incident was very small, and her son did nothing inappropriate, she discussed how she did not appreciate others talking about her family unnecessarily. Therefore, she ended up limiting the time her son spends hanging out with his friends during school nights.

She further mentioned another incident. “My husband and my oldest son, went to a Dunkins’ store to grab donuts and a kid who worked there knew my younger son and asked my older son if he was the brother.” “My son came back and told me how much this kid knew about our family.” She was so taken aback by this incidence, she decided to keep a low profile of her and her family to keep her personal life private. Her involvement at church had brought her too much attention she did not expect.

Others shared similar concerns. One interview discussed how she became resolute on maintaining her distance with members Korean associations.

This place I volunteer at was really well connected with Korean associations. So I didn’t want to get more involved. I don’t think highly of the Korean communities here, they are too Koreanized. They fight with each other and...I got to know one of them and after getting to know the person, I really didn’t want to get involved. I was going to [get more involved].

Therefore, after much consideration, she decided not to get more involved even though she wanted to continue her work at the voluntary site.

Along the same vein, interviews revealed that they did not want to get involved beyond a “certain point.” This certain point varied by individual but interviewees seemed to agree that they did not want strangers to know too much about them. Similar to what the women said above, it was okay to be involved at church; however, interviews revealed that individuals did not want to be too well known, good or bad. The following quote well illustrates the constraints some Koreans feel about their community.

This Korean community is really complex; it’s tight and small and it’s really complicated. There are only a few places we can go to...the grocery store [Korean grocery stores] for example...but people talk too much and it’s not like we can stop going there just because of that. So I keep my distance...you need to keep your distance even at church.

While there are a number of opportunities, this community is not without constraints.

### ***Reasons to keep the Korean community***

Though there were drawbacks to being members of Korean communities, interviewees revealed that there were reasons to keep Korean community and its membership. And, the responses varied depending on the generations. As for the 1<sup>st</sup> generation, one of the reasons had to do with Korean politicians in Korea. A couple of interviewees, both of them in leadership positions in their Korean associations, discussed how Korean communities are needed for Korean politicians because the community functions as a bridge in conducting their international relations businesses with Korea.

They reasoned this was because Korean associations in America have been providing services to Korean politicians in Korea who visit the United States. And in return for generous hospitality, the favors are returned when Korean politicians in Korean Associations in the States visit Korea, although to what extent this is a reoccurring phenomenon and to what extent individuals benefit from the exchange was unclear. Many interviewees only suggested without giving specific information. More important, how much the mutual exchange actually benefits Koreans living in America was uncertain. One thing for certain was that most of the interviewees who mentioned this did not have a positive view of Korean politicians in America.

Another reason for the 1<sup>st</sup> generation to have the Korean community was for the future of the next generations. The interviewees discussed how much the community has functioned as a vehicle to teach the following generations Korean language and culture. One interviewee said, “I try to teach my kids Korean but it’s hard because I don’t know that well either.” The Korean community offers Korean schools to systematically teach the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Koreans language and cultures. Therefore, to some parents, having the access and availability is critical in maintaining and passing down the culture to their children.

A number of 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees discussed how embedded they were in the community. Some participants went on to boast about their connections and how much access and information they have in their community. One of the interviewees who has been living in the area for about 15 years discussed the incidences only an “insider” would know [he discussed these off-the-record]. Not only did the interviewee know the ins and outs of the community, but he had a great concern for the community. A number

of other 1<sup>st</sup> generations shared their concerns with the Korean community and they were leaders of their church or associations.

Some of the current issues that they thought were problematic centered on the community's leadership and direction. The interviewees were especially concerned about the older generation's lack of direction. They emphasized how much the first generation Koreans made great efforts to achieve the American dream but not having any "plans" or specific direction for the whole community.

They [1<sup>st</sup> generation Koreans] don't know why they are making the money let alone know how to spend it. I know someone who used to say he will retire in 5 years yet after 10 years he is still working. They don't know how to use their money for the community. There is neither short- nor long-term plans for them. They only think about their generation and not for the generations to come. I try to share this kind of perspective but...they first need to be settled financially to hear this out...and some are not even at that stage.

He was concerned that the second generation would be left with problems created by the 1<sup>st</sup> generation.

Another interviewee was empathetic that the 1<sup>st</sup> generations Koreans don't know how to enjoy life, spend money, and make investment for the future of the Korean community in the United States. He repeatedly said "Koreans need to stop and smell the roses." The older generations he had spoken with had no idea how to enjoy life. Therefore, whenever he has a chance to talk with other 1<sup>st</sup> generations he talks about "investing" for the future of the Korean community. Others also lamented how short-

sighted the 1<sup>st</sup> generations Koreans were and stressed the need to build a stronger community.

Another interviewee heavily stressed leadership; he discussed the chasm between generations due to language and culture. He said,

The 1st generation needs to create an environment for the next leaders to grow in. I believe Koreans have the passion and ability to be successful but such leaders need to sacrifice. We need someone like that...who initiates action, bring people together and creating a place for people to gather and discuss important issues.

These things may seem like nothing but they are really important.

He further added, “We also need someone who can embrace the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, who understand where they are coming from. We can’t have leaders who haven’t even attended college here...we need someone who can bridge the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations.”

Yet, others said that new leaders must be Christians and others commented that we should not be so focused on “Korean leaders”; that is, less focus on the ethnicity that creates segregation, more on the next leaders in general. In discussing these issues, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees became very emotional.

Another reason to secure the Korean community was for the sake of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation themselves. One interviewee in his 60s discussed some of his acquaintances. He gave an example of a convenient store owner in Baltimore downtown: “He (the shop owner) tells me that every day is a war between him and his customers... He has to make transactions between metal bars from the moment he opens the door to the moment he closes for the day...who knows when he will get shot.” In explaining the shop owner’s

daily routine with much empathy, the interviewee discussed how comforting Korean community mostly churches have been for such people. The interviewee further added,

Sunday is the only day he feels respected and comfortable...no wonder why they (Koreans, like the shop owner) want to show off on Sundays with good cars and nice handbags. I'm not surprised to see packed beauty salons on Sunday mornings. It's the only day they can have a "normal" life.

The interviewee added how much the Korean community has function as moral support for many 1<sup>st</sup> generation Koreans who struggled everyday to make ends meet. Social gatherings at church and other places were great comfort and the only place to they could "rest." Hence, the interviewee discussed how important it is to have a strong community to support the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Koreans.

However, the concern was not shared by the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. Many questioned the need to have an ethnic community in the first place. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation spoke about how he is opposed to creating another "Korea" within America. While he worked closely with a couple of Korean non-profits and was responsible for a number of tasks at his Korean church, he was strongly against creating a strong Korean social enclave; rather, he wanted more Koreans to acculturate into the American society. "[Koreans] don't really go out of their small boundaries to meet new people or get to know other stuff" said one 2<sup>nd</sup> generation who seemed a little embarrassed about how his parents' generation has created an insular community. Although not all 2<sup>nd</sup> generations spoke in similar tones, many emphasized the need for the closed community to acculturate into the mainstream community.

Ultimately, results largely revealed that generation, language, culture and religion serve as ways in which individuals perceived their ethnic community. Regardless of the year of residency in America, individuals' cultural identities were found to have been shaped greatly by their native language, culture and values.

Results of the first research question suggested that members of Korean diaspora make meaning of their ethnic community differently, depending on their cultural identities. This cultural identity was found to influence how individuals made meaning of their ethnic community, and identify its drawbacks as well as its benefits.

## **Research Question 2**

### ***RQ2a: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of social capital?***

Members of the Korean diaspora made meaning of the social capital in 1) how it related to their church community, and 2) how these social capitals were found to be distributed unequally, while 3) some were focused on how they could contribute or give back to the community.

#### ***Social capital from the church community***

Many interviewees expressed that they haven't received much social capital from the Korean community. Rather, interviewees emphasized more on loyalty, trust, and protection and how these intangible resources gave them reasons to socialize and stay within the Korean community and Korean churches.

One interviewee discussed how she came to join her church initially.

When we first came to the States someone living in our apartment complex invited us to their church; it was a very small maybe a 3-4 family church. At that time, it was mid-1980s and there weren't that many Korean people in Maryland



and so you kind of hunger for other Koreans, so we started going and till this day we are still attending the same church. And we actually bonded...really bonded. Because she has been attending the same church for over 20 years, she used family to describe her church members. For her, church is the place where she met her husband, got married and socialized with other Koreans. Therefore, church was her family's socialization center.

Other than socialization, others spoke about intangible social capital such as loyalty and trust. When asked about other resources interviewees expect from their Korean community, one interviewee, referring to her church community, said,

[I expect] loyalty. Trust. Knowing that you can rely on them in times of trouble. Community is where you belong and that's where you have interactions with other people. That's where you feel comfortable and that's where you want these qualities to be. You also want people to be responsible and you want to be able to rely on them when you are in trouble and do the same thing; when they are in trouble, you want to be able to help so it's that commitment between the members and the community.

She also added how she returns to the same to other members of her church in times of their need. Trust and loyalty resonated throughout interviewees.

Another interviewee discussed how he has received other resources. "I think I've also gotten resources to develop my character and alternate view on several things...along with friendship..." As he has attended his church for more than 10 years, over the years, he has been able to mature in his character and Christian views.

There were tangible resources individuals were able to receive through church. One interviewee said, “I have received [help with] car maintenance, jobs, home improvement...etc.” One of the deacons at his church was a mechanic, so he was able to receive help fixing his car. And, he was able to find his first job through another deacon at his church. Hence, he received many tangible resources through church network.

Interviewees discussed how close and tight-knit their church networks were. One interviewee said,

When my family first came to the States, church was the only place where we were able to meet other Korean people. But, other than the church community and other than the Korean grocery store that we went to, I really didn’t have any other contacts with other Koreans...so we became really close. And parents started a *kye* meeting (monetary rotating system); and with that money we traveled together. Up to now parents still go back and forth, they still call each other when there is family gathering like marriages.

Her family has been attending the same church for almost 30 years, and therefore, her family maintained close relationships with those whom had gone to the same churches with for a similar duration. While the greater time with church members indicated less time and energy spent to interact with others outside of church, this aspect was not described much.

#### ***Social capital to contribute to the community***

On the other hand, others were more concerned about what they can give to the community rather than what they can receive. One interviewee who has been attending her church for about 18 years said, “Receive what? I have a sense of ownership here [her

church] and that means serving others...giving what is mine to others...I'm not here to be served but to serve just like Jesus' teachings. I don't expect anything." She seemed startled to have been asked this question and was resolute on providing her service to the church and members of her congregation. Her attitude toward offering resources was shaped by her Christian faith.

For others, it was more cultural. One interviewee mentioned the resources she has been providing.

I pray for them [members of my church]. I want to help others in times of their needs. I want to bring comfort when they are troubled and give food when they are hungry. I think I can offer my place for those things....I think it's important to have that kind of heart...heart to help others when they need it.

She discussed how she opens up her place for gatherings and invites friends and church members to her place for dinner occasionally. When asked why she does what she does, she said,

I remember my mom and grandmother always bringing people who are hungry to our house to feed them...I grew up watching that. My parents also taught me to be generous and when I first came to the States, many Korean friends were generous to me. I received so much help from so many people.

While she learned to help others from her parents, she also received much help from the Korean community in times of her need.

#### ***Lack of social capital for some***

While the 1<sup>st</sup> generation explained much about their social capital, members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation did not elaborate much on resources they receive in church or through the

church network. In discussing this issue with one of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewee, he said, “that’s probably [because] they have not received help directly. Their parents may have but many haven’t yet so they don’t appreciate the community nor do they think there are any benefits.” Then, he gave an example of how his Korean association helped a second generation enter the Naval Academy. The interviewee, a member of the Washington, DC, Korean Association in Virginia (one of the largest in the DC area), found out a Korean American was not accepted to the Naval Academy because he lacked a recommendation letter from a governor. Knowing this, he was able to get in contact with his friends who were able to obtain a recommendation letter from a politician of a higher rank. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation student who then was accepted to the Academy later wrote a letter thanking him and the association, promising to contribute much to the Korean community later on. The interviewee discussed how many 2<sup>nd</sup> generations do not appreciate the Korean community because they do not benefit directly.

Indeed, while the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generation interviewees were able to discuss much about help they have received from the community, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewees were not able to elaborate much on questions concerning social capital. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewee said, “I think I receive it if I seek it...I think resources are limited...” It seemed while some resources were available to all members such as Korean school others were limited to some individuals. Also, one of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations discussed how he “rarely has interactions with the 1<sup>st</sup> generation” at his church. Perhaps because 2<sup>nd</sup> generations have access to more resources outside of church (e.g., work or school), and they do not rely as much as the older generations when it comes to information or other help.

When asked about what they would like to receive from their ethnic community, answers varied. One interviewee discussed how she hopes to have a Korean cultural center so she can bring her granddaughter there and teach her about the Korean culture and arts. Having learned flower arrangement and other artistic skills in Korea, she was willing to offer courses if there were people who would be willing to learn from her. She was also interested in learning other skills from others as well. However, due to the lack of such resource center, she was unable to apply her plans.

Ultimately, results revealed that the structural and organizational culture of Korean churches provided unique social capital to members of the Korean diaspora. Also, interviews revealed that many were more concerned about contributing to the organization's social capital rather than benefiting from the accumulated public good. Moreover, results showed that social capital was not equally distributed to church members and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations were not receiving much social capital from Korean communities in comparison to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 1.5 generations.

Results of the research question that addresses how members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of social capital, suggested that individuals' perceptions of social capital were shaped by their affiliation with Korean churches or Korean associations as well as generational type.

***RQ2b: How does the (Korean) community create opportunities for social capital?***

The social capital at the 1) interpersonal level was different from social capital at the group level, and 2) many members of the Korean diaspora, especially the 1<sup>st</sup> generation identified the community social capital to be weak. Specific evidence for each of these themes is discussed below.

*At the interpersonal and group level*

Interviews revealed several ways in which the Korean community creates opportunities for social capital. First, interviews revealed a number of fellowship activities members that Korean churches were engaged in. Interviewees discussed various activities that they were involved in through church throughout a year. The most common ones were seasonal yard sales, bake sales to raise money for activities for the youth groups or women's ministries, and mission trips. While these activities were not mandatory for everyone to attend, many interviewees discussed that they actively participated numerous times. These social gathering were places to socialize and share information.

In terms of sharing information, the 1<sup>st</sup> generations were active. One interviewee said, "information needs to be shared" and implied how selfish it is to withhold information that would benefit others in general. When asked where she shares information with others, she discussed how most of conversations she has were with other women while preparing food for church fellowship entail information about various things. "We talk about cooking, our kids...where we bought this and that." Because she was in charge of food for a fellowship at her church, she spent numerous hours at the church kitchen. And, because people stop by the kitchen for various reasons she has frequent conversations with many people in her church concerning food, family and other issues. The church kitchen functioned as an important site to seek and give information.

Others also discussed catching up on the latest news with other members during cell meetings (group meetings for Bible study; usually held weekly). One woman, a mother of two young children, discussed how she gathers information about education-

related topics or legal issues at her cell meetings where she can meet people who have experienced similar situations before.

There were other ways in which information was gathered. One woman discussed how one deaconess at her church brings her Korean newspapers weekly as she does not subscribe to Korean newspapers. She said, "I'm not so big on Korean news but she brings it [a Korean-language newspaper published in America] to me once she's done so I read them when I get a chance." When asked what types of articles she is usually interested in reading she said laughing, "well...just stuff that affects me like the new changes about visas." She disclosed how she is too busy to read articles about other issues that do not have direct influence on her and her family.

One pastor in charge of her church's children's ministry discussed how she gathers information concerning youth ministry through the pastor's network. While she does receive mails about youth-related activities in the area, she mostly asks other church youth pastors for information and events such as Vocational Bible Study. Another pastor, in charge of youth ministry at her church, discussed how she has regular meetings with other pastors in the area (e.g., MD, VA, DC) so that she could bring alliance with other church leaders. She discussed how churches in the area come together for bigger events such as youth kids' revivals and prayer walks in the Washington, DC.

Channels of communication varied. Some interviews discussed how technology is bringing more convenience for a number of activities. One interviewee discussed how she is now able to read more news and gather more information since she brought a smartphone. "I didn't read news as much but with smartphone, I have news apps so I read them whenever I have some free time." Therefore, she does not have to rely on others for

information as much as she used to. Another added, “before my smartphone, I’d have to turn the computer on and type in the website to read the current news but I don’t have to do that anymore.” One mother also said, “I have to watch animations on TV because of my children but now I can just read news on my iPhone.” A children’s ministry pastor also discussed how she finds more resources through the web these days than through her personal contacts. “I just have to type in “children’s ministry” on the web and it gives me so many resources. It’s so convenient.” The pastor does not have to contact other pastors for information to enhance her children’s ministry programs.

However, there were limitations on benefiting from church social capital. One parent discussed how she is unable to receive much help about her kids’ schools through the church network. “I registered for the PTA for my kids’ sake. I really thought I should do more. Once you register, then you get emails about news...so I’ve volunteered several times...parties and field trips and whatnot.” But she seemed reluctant that she is not involved as much as she thinks she should be. Another mother discussed how she never went to her son’s schools for parent-teacher meetings. She reasoned, “I actually went once but couldn’t understand a thing. I sat there but really I didn’t have a clue. I didn’t understand what was going on and couldn’t answer what the teacher was asking. Since then, I didn’t set a foot in his school.” The interviewee laughed while she said this but in serious voice continued, “there were times I wanted to help him [her son] but I really didn’t know anything so I felt sorry for him.” Because she did not know any other parents who went to the same school as her son, she didn’t have resources to help her son.

The cultural barriers for the 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents were often misunderstood. One interviewee said, “once my son asked me, “mom, why do Korean parents dress up when



they come to PTA meetings?” he saw Korean moms wearing channel bags and expensive clothing during one of the PTA meetings. Because in Korean culture, it is expected of the parents to dress up to meet their children’s teachers as a show of respect; her 2<sup>nd</sup> generation son had misunderstood the other parents. Often the 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents were found to lack knowledge on the American ways of doing things, due to lack of interaction with American parents.

But the language barrier was more serious. Another interviewee, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation mother and a teacher at an elementary school said,

When schools have picnics and PTA meetings just go there and sit; when there are back to school nights “go!”... just because you don’t speak English doesn’t mean you can just not show up; you just have to get yourself involved but they [the 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents] are like, well I’m not going to understand anything...so why bother. That kind of thing is kind of sad. They pay membership fees to join the PTA but they will never do anything.

Her frustration was clearly displayed as she vented for several minutes on the things the 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents did at her school that she did not understand. She further described how actively she has been encouraging the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Korean parents, but she discussed how they only mingle amongst themselves. Though she was also a Korean descendant she did not understand the 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents.

As such, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents seemed to lack opportunities to interact with the American parents because of the language and culture barriers. But, examination of interviews revealed that they put themselves in the insular position. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation who did not view this socialization pattern positively said,

I think some people just like to hang out with people they feel like physically can relate to...that bonds people and opens them up...I know some people whose parents only hang out with Koreans and they only learn to hang out with Korean kids so I think their experiences and childhood influence that.

Another 2<sup>nd</sup> generation also added, “I think there are also people who don’t feel the need to adapt to the American society...they want to go back to their roots and not learn English...and keep speaking Korean with their clique...” Some 2<sup>nd</sup> generations when discussing how the 1<sup>st</sup> generations were very critical in discussing their communication and networking behaviors.

While Korean communities and churches offered many benefits and opportunities to socialize and share information, the tight-knit networks were not viewed positively by the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Koreans. Moreover, new technology was found to weaken communication channels amongst members of Korean diaspora, as it provides greater convenience and opportunities for them to gather information. However, 1<sup>st</sup> generations were found to still rely more on social gatherings through a church to meet and socialize.

#### ***Weak social capital at the community level***

Identifying social capital at the community level was very difficult. While social capital that is produced through interpersonal interactions at dyadic and group levels were visible, social capital at the community level was more abstract and invisible. This may be due according to the participants, for several reasons. One reason is that everyone’s busy schedule made attendance at community level gatherings rare. One respondent said, “everyone is so busy with their lives...there are Korean festivals like KORUS but I never

go.” And another said, “I don’t even have time to watch TV.” Although there are annual Korean festivals to celebrate immigration history and its culture and food at the community level, none of the interviewees seemed particularly interested in such an event.

Another interviewee also mentioned,

[People in this] Korean community are so busy...my parents too [they] work all day. So when there is time to rest we just get together with our neighbors and people from church...we don’t go to festivals. We have our own culture now. We connect because we have so many things in common.

In such a way, rather than reaching out to a large community, individuals found comfort in interacting with their close friends and neighbors. As such, interviewees much preferred spending time with their close friends and family, who were also very flexible with their busy daily schedules.

Another mentioned how Koreans are somewhat individualistic. “Koreans like to do their own thing, and if something happens they all get together ...” This statement shows that many individuals in the Korean diaspora are primarily concerned with themselves and members of their close network. In a similar vein, one interviewee discussed individualistic tendencies of Koreans.

I think this is one of the characteristics of our people. I think Koreans’ individualistic tendencies are much stronger than collectivistic tendencies. I think it’s even stronger than Americans. It’s just that it remains hidden. I think people don’t like to show that they are individualistic...most of the people are...because

we are so ingrained in Confucianism...we need to talk less than others. So I think pursuit of individual interest supersedes group interests.

In such a way, this interviewee discussed the individualized Korean community.

In strengthening the community, many gave an example of a Jewish society. One 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewee said, “Jewish communities seem very strong; they have strong small groups. Also they know how to invest in the young generation and they are not afraid to make sacrifices for the larger group.” Other 1st generation interviewees also stressed Jewish communities “unity” and their “sacrifice” for the good of a larger community as well as their strengths in looking far ahead. And, these terms were repeatedly mentioned in interviews.

In discussing lack of collaboration, the 1<sup>st</sup> generations had plenty to discuss. One interview, also in leadership in one of the largest Korean associations in the area said, “There is no collaboration in the Korean community...In the near future, Korean churches will face a number of issues. I think this is the glorious time for Korean churches...in the near future it will follow the path of Chinese churches.” He explained the short history of Chinese churches in the area and discussed how weakened the church communities have become today. Another interviewee in a leadership position at his association said, “People need to agree on principles...but a lot of people are near-sighted...if there is a [monetary] loss, people throw out reasoning...there is no principle.” As such, many 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees lamented on the lack of cooperation and collaboration of the Korean community and shared their concerns on the future of the Korean community in the area.

Other than cooperation and collaboration, there were other concerns. One interviewee said how the community has no resources: “People don’t think about contributing to the public good or contributing to this society...they work hard to earn money but they don’t know how to spend that money.” Others also mentioned a lack of “community asset” and attributed the blame to the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. One interviewee also discussed how churches are financially unstable. Mentioning several churches in the area, he discussed how church management skills are weak in those churches and how their large expenses are leading to financial crisis.

Unlike the social capital at the dyadic and group level, social capital at the community level were perceived to be weak by the interviewees. Many attributed it to the lack of cooperation to the busy daily lives Koreans lead, characteristics of Koreans, yet others attributed it to the lack of vision of the 1<sup>st</sup> generations and their unwillingness to sacrifice for the benefit of the community.

Results of the research question that examine how the Korean diaspora create opportunities for social capital, revealed that members of the Korean diaspora much preferred to invest in building social capital at dyadic and group level (e.g., close friends network, church) than toward the social capital for the Korean community at large. The interviewees revealed that social capital at the dyadic and group levels do not have direct contribution to the social capital at the community level.

### **Research Question 3**

#### ***RQ3a: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of civic engagement?***

The members of the Korean diaspora made meaning of civic engagement in a various ways. Factors that discouraged the members of the Korean diaspora from actively

engaging in civic activities were: 1) weak consciousness and lack of ownership, 2) language and cultural barriers, 3) lack of resources and motivation; conversely, 4) factors that encouraged them were civic engagement through church and their parental status. Specific evidence for each of these themes is discussed below.

***Weak consciousness and lack of ownership***

When the interviewees were asked to explain their thoughts on civic engagement, many asked for clarification, definition, and or examples of civic engagement. Although the interviewees were familiar with the terms, many wanted to double-check to see whether what they were thinking about was correct before giving their answers. When the interviewees were asked to describe their civic engagement, the frequent responses were, “I must have not thought about these things...my mind is drawing a blank.” “What do you mean by civic engagement? Can you give me some examples?” and long pauses as the interviewees thought about the definitions.

One interview defined civic engagement as the following:

I think civic engagement means living a healthy life that would be beneficial to the society...I think that's civic duty. Also raising our kids to become role models in the society...enabling them to share their lives with others...I think that's civic engagement...it's not about becoming activists and participating in protests.

A few other interviewees described civic engagement in a similar vein.

Yet, others were somewhat unfamiliar with the term. One 1.5 generation interviewee said, “civic engagement? I don't know what that means. It's really unfamiliar. I don't think I've thought about it much. You mean like voicing your right? Or doing

what a good citizen is to do like recycling?” Yet another said, “yeah I guess I do what I need to do. I pay my taxes, teach my kids good values. And try to be a good citizen, not to cut in line (laughs).” Another said, “I’ve donated food and clothes here and there. I’ve also volunteered at a local elementary school and taught arts and crafts to young kids there.” As such, the definition of civic engagement varied and wide range of activities were included in their definition of civic engagement.

Despite interviewees’ previous activities, many did not perceive themselves to have been active. One interviewee who has volunteered at local fairs and donated much food and clothes to those in need kept on insisting she hasn’t done much. When asked why she thinks in that way despite what she has done she said, “I don’t think I’m very conscious of it...I really haven’t thought about it seriously. I haven’t had a chance to really think about what civic engagement is.” As such, she had just “helped out” when someone needed help and provided what she could for others without thinking the act is civic engagement.

In a similar vein, one participant who chose to stay as a Korean citizen despite the length of residency in America discussed how her education in America changed the way she thinks about civic engagement.

In one of the last classes in my law school, a professor asked, “So, what are you going to do with your law degree?”...that question was so thought-provoking. I didn’t really think much about what I can do as an individual; because Korea is such a collective society, I always thought about collective action and not so much of individual agency. But that got me thinking about what I can do personally for this society.

Even though it has been several years since she graduated she still recalled this moment, which provoked her to be more conscious about her individual civic engagement.

However, lack of consciousness resonated throughout interviews. One parent, when asked to name some of civic engagements she has done, first hesitated and slowly gave her response. “I’ve donated books to local schools...I recycle. And I’ve donated to the World Mission and other local nonprofits, mission centers, that help North Korean and China.” And, she ended with, “but really, I haven’t thought about it much” and laughed. Other interviewees also said, “I’ve donated a few times...but can’t seem to remember anything in particular.” “I think I’ve done quite a few but don’t remember much about them. They didn’t leave a big impression on me.” Another interviewee said she has not done anything because she was too busy with her daily life, but when discussing an irrelevant topic, she discussed how much she has been involved in a nursing home for several years. Although all of these interviewees have been engaged in various activities for several years they did not consider these activities to have been civic engagement.

Interviews revealed another reason for weak civic engagement was attributed to weak ownership as American citizens. Although 36 interviewees had already lived in America for many years as American citizens, Americans were still referred to as “they” and not “us.” Other 1.5 generation interviewees discussed how she never thought of America as her country until an incident that occurred to her.

I think JAMA was really good for me. It helped me realize my roots. JAMA made me realize that I need to pray for this country with sense of ownership; there aren’t that many people who are praying for the country now. But now I’m



instilled with that mentality. Before then I didn't really have a sense of ownership in this country.

One Christian conference she attended, Jesus Awakening Movement of America (JAMA) helped her secure a sense of ownership for this country.

Others discussed how they still struggle to find their sense of ownership in this country. One interviewee who had acquired citizenship several years ago stated,

I still don't know what to say when my boss and I talk about Korea. When I say "we" but I don't know who this "we" is anymore. My boss is interested in Korea so when we talk about the World Cup or the Olympics...let's say Korea won yesterday then I say, "yeah I saw it, too, good game" but I don't know if I can use "we" to refer to the Korean team. Technically, I'm not a Korean anymore. So when there's news about Korea or when we talk about Korea at work I'm not sure if I should use "they" or "we"...so I just use "the Korean team" and "South or North Korea" to refer to Korea.

Yet, when she was speaking Korean, she kept on using "we" to refer to Koreans and "them" to refer to Americans in general.

One interviewee shared how her sense of ownership recently changed drastically. I recently realized something I have been very wrong about for many years. Ever since I was born, I think I thought about becoming successful. I've always been self-centered...so I always debated between living in America or in Korea. But, then I went to a nursing school...I thought I was going to die; I literally experienced hell here. It was unbearable. And I realized something there and then what life is all about. It was the turning point of my life. Since then I've thought

about ways of helping others...using my talent to help serve this country. Because I was in a situation where I needed help and I realized that I can't always help others even if I want to.

Since then, she committed herself to helping others. First, she decided to donate to help two children in Haiti through World Vision. She said, "to me, buying something with this money is a luxury but for others, this amount could save their lives." "I'll continue to support [them] as long as I have the financial resources." She then added how she persuaded her friend to do the same through World Vision, but the friend discontinued the donation after a couple months. With a strong sense of ownership she was thinking about expanding her service to others.

#### ***Civic engagement through church***

Despite the interviewees' active participation in the church sphere, the interviewees did not consider voluntary activities through church as civic engagement. "It [church activities] didn't occur to be because church is kind of local ... it's religious..." Others also responded in similar ways: "For me, civic engagement is getting involved in the local community but honestly I never had the time" another in a similar vein said, "honestly I really don't do much other than to support my church." Yet another interviewee, an owner of a Taekwondo academy, whom I personally know to do several things at his church, didn't mention any those engagements and said that he has only volunteered to teach taekwondo at a local disabilities center. Other interviewees who have been active in short-term mission trips abroad, yard sales, car wash, bake sale and many other activities to raise money to help local neighbors did not consider those activities to have been civic engagement. In these ways, many interviewees did not

include activities done at or through their local church to be part of civic engagement despite attending church itself is civic engagement.

Many interviewees expressed their desire to be more active outside of their church sphere. The interviewees were involved in their church in more than one of the following ways: Bible school teachers, church choir, counselor, parking lot guides, Korean school teacher, and part of the media team. And, because of their busy schedules, many frequently said, “too busy to do anything else.” One interviewee said he had been busy with his church for the past 10 years. Not only had he been busy with voluntary services but also with conducting regular services (e.g., daily dawn services, Friday night service, Saturday young adult service, and Sunday’s main service) that he needs to attend in addition to voluntary services. As such many interviewees resonated how tired they were with their local churches in terms of time and energy.

There was another drawback when it came to conducting civic engagement through churches. One interviewee said,

I once donated blood at my previous church. I wanted to do more later so I went to a hospital but they didn’t know where I could go to donate blood. So, I didn’t go anymore. The person who had organized the blood drive at my previous church was affiliated with a hospital so she knew how to do these things. I wish there is someone at my church who can organize this.

Another interviewee also said, “I would like to do something related to nursing homes. I went to a nursing home once or twice but really couldn’t continue because I was too busy but if there are people at my church who are interested, I’d be willing to do more.”

However, due to limited types of civic engagements available to them at their Korean churches, they had to resort to what was available.

When interviewees who were involved in church were asked if they had considered doing less for the church so that he/she can contribute more time and efforts to other organization or communities, they explained the challenges. As vacancies don't fill quickly, members who are active in their churches are hesitant to leave their church to get involved in other activities outside of church. Others believed that they have the responsibilities to serve their local church; this was especially the case for those who held leadership positions.

Yet, others discussed how they were tied to church because of their children; parents wanted to serve the church so that they could pay more attention to their children. Others were committed because it was their "turn" given the number of years they had been at their church. Hence, in such a way, church became a double-edged sword; that is, while teaching and encouraging members to become more active in serving the community, due to the church-related activities, members were unable to do much outside of church. In such a way, while attending church itself is an act of civic engagement and although churches provide opportunities for civic engagement, members were restricted to civic engagement within the church sphere.

### ***Factors that encourage civic engagement***

The interviews revealed that the interviewees' perception on civic engagement was changing. One factor was the interviewees' status as parents. One participant, a mother of five children, discussed how she became more aware of civic engagement as her older children began to ask her more questions about social, religious and political

issues that they have been learning at school. She said, “I’m more disengaged than engaged but whenever I have issues I go speak to the principal and sometimes I’m not happy with the answer. I also talk with my friends and my kids’ parents about issues I have with schools my kids go to.” Although she was not as active since her children now attend an elementary school, middle and a high school, she now is interested in PTA meetings and other activities in the schools her children are involved in.

Another parent also said,

I want to raise my children strong or the way that I want...I’m worried about my daughter...I am thinking about what I can do so that her culture, her color does not become an obstacle in her career. I want her to be very independent and I want her to be able to compete with anyone and any culture.

Perhaps because this mother thinks her children’s ethnicity could hinder their paths to success, she was more involved in her church and her children’s schools.

Another parent who is also a teacher mentioned how her status as a teacher changed her civic engagement.

I think kids get really excited when teachers get involved, so they put coins in the container or bring can foods from home. It encourages them to contribute something because the teacher is doing it. “I’m going to do this because my teacher is doing it” so that kind of thing. Also the fundraising and food drive...I don’t have to do it but it’s something that school does... it’s your choice as a teacher...but I’d like to set an example for the kids.

As such, even though she does not have to be as involved as she is, she chooses to be more active to set a good example to others.

Yet, for others, their minority status changed the ways they perceived civic engagement. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewee said,

I think it has to do with my not really feeling comfortable in American culture because like I said...I don't feel really comfortable because of the way we were raised...we were not raised "strong" I was the first to graduate from college....it was kind of...it was a big thing...maybe if I grew under strong parents who were more educated who really raised their kids strong.

Because her parents were not familiar with the American culture and lacked understanding of the American system, her parents were not able to bring enough exposure in terms of civic engagement for her to feel comfortable engaging in civic activities. She continued, "I would have been different so I want to raise my kids strong so they can say what they want and not be ashamed...and I want them do be able to do these things as an individual as a citizen. And have confidence about what they do." Although she considers herself as a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, she expressed her discomfort at being in an all-American environment.

### *Language and cultural barriers*

A number of interviewees discussed how they were discouraged as result of language barriers. This was especially true for parents who were not able to speak English fluently. A mother and an elementary teacher said the following on fellow Korean parents:

Because they [Korean parents] are first generation here they can't speak the language, they don't want to get involved in the community; they don't want to get involved outside of their home because they feel very uncomfortable. They

are afraid that their teacher might say something and that they might not be able to understand and they don't want their child to feel embarrassed because their parents don't know how to speak English. So they keep to themselves and don't open up to other people.

She understands why parents are not involved in social interactions at the community level and was upset that so many Korean parents just stay in their comfort zone as that also has an influence on her.

They [American parents] want other parents to come and join; they [Korean parents] don't have to communicate very well. But there's always help needed even to set up, clean up ...heat the food. Even things like that, they don't want to come in. they [American parents] don't say "Koreans" but they say it's just "American" parents who are normally there. If there are other-culture parents, they speak English very well. They would be 2nd generation parents not 1st generation.

As such, while the interviewee was frustrated at the 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents, she was also bothered that other Americans tended to categorize Korean parents as the inactive ones.

Other than the language barrier, there were cultural barriers that discouraged Korean-speaking parents from becoming more involved. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation parent who has been encouraging other 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents to be more involved in their children's school said the following:

I also told them to invite other kids over like have their kids' friends come over...a lot of times they kind of...they are uncomfortable having other kids come to their homes because of the food and maybe the kids may come and smell

something and say something and maybe the snacks that they provide are different...a lot of time they say it's to protect their children...but in the long run...I don't that it will...they don't want to take risks.

The cultural difference and lack of understanding of the American culture seemed to have inhibited the Korean-speaking parents from becoming more active.

One 1<sup>st</sup> generation parent who has only been to the PTA meeting once or twice says that she really didn't understand a word during the meetings and felt so humiliated. She couldn't bring herself to attend more meetings because she was so "embarrassed" in front of her kids. This mother's story shows how, despite the interest in becoming more active, cultural aspects such as losing face or losing authority in front of children prohibited her from active engagement.

One 1<sup>st</sup> generation parent discussed what she did to make up for her inactiveness. "I signed up for the PTA so I get emails about events so I sign up for the ones I can attend." Although she is not active as she thinks she should, she does what she can to show her support. Other parents, as well, discussed how they have been inactive due to their busy schedule. Although language and cultural barriers may have been the biggest factors that inhibited active engagement, their busy work schedule was found to be another factor.

However, one 1<sup>st</sup> generation parent was glad she was not so involved at her son's school. "Given my personality, if I speak English well, I probably would have been a helicopter mom and he [her son] probably would not have liked that. So I'm thankful that I didn't speak English so well then." She also said, despite her disengagement, her son did not face any issues at school as result of her inactiveness.



### ***Lack of resources and motivation***

Some interviewees were unable to become active because they simply did not know *where* or *how* to begin. One interviewee said, “I’m not involved in civic engagement for a couple of reasons: first, I don’t know where to begin...” Even though he has lived in America for more than 10 years, he was still not sure where to begin. Another also mentioned how she became involved in a tutoring program to teach young kids, “I saw it in a listserv and I volunteered...I’ve been meaning to but just didn’t know how....” To this 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewee finding information created difficulties in starting civic engagement.

Time constraint was one of the barriers that were mentioned repeatedly. Interviewees discussed how busy they are. “Like time I don’t have...so I’m not going to start something that doesn’t see its fruit...” “I work until 9 pm; I don’t have time to do anything else even if I want to.” Similar statements were repeated by interviewees. Others who were active understood how other Koreans, especially the 1<sup>st</sup> generations, were busy making ends meet. “I don’t blame them, they are so busy with their businesses.” As such, interviewees understood why other Koreans were inactive when it came to civic engagement.

Another type of resources was lack of resources such as critical mass and energy. For me...I really haven’t seen something that’s tremendously against my values other than gay marriage, so for me, I mean sure I wish for a better society but .... Since there is no mass, for me to create that mass, I know it takes a lot of energy and effort I just don’t see myself doing it because there is a huge hurdle that you

have to go over ...any grassroots movement ...the person who starts it really need to have the passion and time and resources.

Although this interviewee had an issue, he was unwilling to push it forward as the process would require great amount of effort and people also willing to work together.

Another also added, “so for me to make my issue a civic issue requires a lot of effort and for me I don’t see a really big issue so I’m not making an effort.” In this way, a number of interviewees were unwilling to take part in civic engagement.

Another interviewee when asked if he has any issues that he would like to be more vocal about said,

Yes, I wish all the land-lines are underground, we have so much snow here and every time it snows our power gets disconnected. I’ve thought about making some changes but I really don’t have any power so I haven’t been able to do much. You have to bring so many people together...it’s not realistic.

Therefore, even though this interviewee had an issue he wanted to pursue, he did not pursue due it to the limitations he perceived.

Yet, for others, personal motivation was an issue. Several young 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewees described how they were only involved in civic engagement because it was a part of a requirement to graduate from high school. One who recently graduated from her high school said, “I’ve volunteered at a senior center. Half of it was to fulfill service hours for school.” And she did not continue once she graduated from high school. All the college-aged interviewees were found to have been involved in civic engagement because of high school requirements.

Yet, for others, lack of information was a critical issue. Especially interviewees who were not familiar with the recent technological advancements, word-of-mouth were important channels to share information. One interviewee said, “I’d eventually like to get more involved once I retire.” When she was asked if she would know who to ask once she was ready to be more engaged she confidently said yes and provided me with a name. Coincidentally the referred person was someone whom I had interviewed previously and he was the one who had said, “even if I want to, I wouldn’t know where to begin [civic engagement].” Therefore, while one may think he/she has the right person to ask for information, it was found that it may not always be the right person to ask for resources.

The issues the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations face were somewhat different from the 1<sup>st</sup> generations. Some 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Koreans discussed how they have not seen their parents actively involved in civic engagements. One 1.5 generation interviewee said, “I’ve told my parents to give to World Vision or to other places but they don’t. They don’t really know well.” Other interviewees discussed how their parents do not usually discuss issues concerning civic engagement at home.

Ultimately, results revealed that lack of consciousness and sense of ownership, cultural and language barriers, as well as factors such as resources, time, efforts, and motivations limited civic engagements for the members of the Korean diaspora. There were also factors that encouraged civic engagement such as individuals’ status as parents or teachers. Also, personal enlightenment or experiences that prompted interviewees to become more active in terms of civic engagement also encouraged them to take more active roles in becoming active in civic engagement.

Results of the research question that addresses how the Korean diaspora makes meaning of civic engagement suggested that members of Korean diaspora define civic engagement differently and make meaning of civic engagement through their personal experiences, perceived barriers, and changing statuses.

***RQ3b: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of political engagement?***

Members of the Korean diaspora were found to make meaning of political engagement in several ways. The factors that inhibited their political engagement were: 1) misunderstanding on the operationalization of the term political engagement, 2) lack of strong ownership, 3) misperception on politics across generations, 4) gender, 5) double standards on politics, and the tension between church and politics.

***Misunderstanding on the operationalization of the term political engagement***

The interviews revealed that interviewees were unsure of the definition of the term political engagement. Therefore, a number of interviewees asked if I could interview someone else other than them. Some of the repeated comments were, “I don’t think I know much about the topic but I’m sure you also need to study those who don’t know these things [political engagement] too.” “I don’t think I’m qualified to talk about it...maybe you should find someone who knows better.” Some were even apologetic, “I’m really sorry but I really don’t know enough.” In these ways, many, especially the older 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees were hesitant to answer questions regarding political engagement.

The ways in which interviewees defined political engagement varied. Some only spoke of paying taxes as their primary political activity while others included voting, jury duty and watching news/newspapers as political engagement. Yet, others included other

activities such as participating in politicians' campaigns and signing petitions as political engagement. The range of activities was wide and varied.

When the interviewees were asked to name the political engagements they have been involved in, the attitudes varied. Some were proud even boastful of their involvement. One common answer was, "I pay my taxes..." Paying the taxes was the repeatedly heard political activities interviewees were active in. One participant with pride said, "I think paying taxes is the most basic thing you can do. I haven't skipped a year in all the years I'm been here [in America]." One interviewee said, "I watch the news every day for about an hour...I would say I'm pretty active."

Yet, others were somewhat embarrassed of their political engagements and underestimated their activities. Several interviewees simply said, "I guess paying taxes?" and awkwardly laughed while speaking. Yet another said, "I've done jury duty and voting...I've done that but beyond that no." Others in similar tone explained how they have not been able to because of other reasons. "I was going to vote during the last district election but I was really tired that day. I regret not having done it." And, others were plainly not interested in politics. "I'm just not interested" was commonly heard throughout the interviews. Regardless of the time spent or activities the interviewees have been engaged in, some perceived themselves to have done less than they should.

Interestingly, some interviewees who had said they were inactive, when probed further, were found to have been active. For instance, one interviewee who said he was not active said, "I spend about an hour every morning reading the news and blogs online. I've done this for several years." He was also found to have a group of friends with whom he regularly discussed political issues. Another interviewee who had said, "I

haven't done anything" repeatedly, was found to boycott Starbuck products and has been recommending her friends and colleagues to do the same for several years. Yet another interviewee who said she has not done anything, was found to have signed several petitions in the past few years. In these ways, due to varying definitions of political engagement and recall issues, a number of interviewees did not say they were active.

***Lack of strong ownership***

The interviews revealed that political engagement was very much influenced by individuals' sense of ownership. As almost half of the interviewees were naturalized citizens, and they have not been instilled with a strong sense of ownership yet. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewee said, "I think people need to be instilled with stronger ownership...this is my country. How I do things and what I do will affect how this country is going to be kind of mentality." Yet another said, "1<sup>st</sup> generations shouldn't think that they are just visiting; rather, they should also think that this is their country. Only when that happens will their attitudes change and will they be more attentive [to politics] and be responsible." Another said, referring to the 1<sup>st</sup> generation, said, "It's not like they want to be selfish and care for themselves only...they lack a sense of ownership." Similar sentiment resonated throughout the interviewees.

Some interviewees thought that they were unable to participate because of their legal status. One participant with a working visa said, "Well, I'm not a citizen here so whatever I say will not be reflected." While she can engage in other political activities other than voting, such as signing petitions or donating to political campaigns, she did not consider herself to be eligible for all political activities. The Green Card holders' opinions also were similar in this respect.

However, one interview commented, “I don’t think it’s [not being politically active] a matter of having or not having the citizenship...it’s more of how much you have in common with them [Americans in general]...in terms of your experiences, opinions, and emotions...” The interviewee also added that “sharing common ground” with Americans was an important factor in becoming politically active.

### ***Misperception on politics across generations***

One of the salient reasons members were not engaged in political activities was found to have been due to negative attitudes toward politics in general. One interviewee said, “I’m not really a negative person but I really do have negative feelings toward politicians so I’m not interested in politics.” Another discussed how his perception has been shaped by his past experiences in politics in Korea. He commented, “The nail that sticks out gets hammered down, that’s why so many Koreans don’t get into politics including myself.” He further added, “Koreans have that mentality so they avoid anything that could bring too much attention or criticism.”

Although he did not explain the specifics, he explained how politics is done in Korea has influenced his perception on politics in general. One 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewee, who had experienced political upheaval in Korea in the 1960s to ‘70s said, “I have my doubts about politics and having gone through what I have gone through...I don’t think I can trust the government, any government.” Another 1<sup>st</sup> generation also said,

I worked for the government become I came to America. During one of the presidential elections, I saw people counting the votes...their eyes were all red...and I thought I won’t get into politics. And, I thought to myself, “politics is

scary” I heard it’s like drugs. I couldn’t have even if I wanted to because I was a federal employee.

Another 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewee said, “I am interested in politics but how should I say this, I could say I’m sick of politics. Seeing how it’s done in Korea, they [politicians] are all the same. It never changes.” As such, 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees in their 50s and 60s, who had experienced politics in Korea express strong pessimism toward politics, especially on Korean politics.

The 1.5 generation interviewees also shared similar pessimism but their expressions were milder. One 1.5 generation said, “I see them [Korean politicians in Korea] fighting all the time. So I just decided to care less about politics.” Another 1.5 generation also said, “I don’t care. Korean politics is pathetic.” The 1.5 generations, when describing politics in Korea used the terms, “fight” and “pathetic.” Although they did not have direct experience of Korean politics, they seem to hold negative feelings toward Korean politics.

The interviewees’ perception on 1<sup>st</sup> generation Korean politicians in America was also negative. Throughout the interviews, many addressed their distrust with the Korean associations in the Washington, DC, area. Koreans in Virginia are able to view a Korean channel that televises Korean news in Korea as well as news concerning Korean political activities in American. One interviewee who watches the channel frequently, said, “I see them fighting all the time; all they do is fight.” Another who views the channel said, “Now I don’t think too much about the fights. I just go, “Oh, they are fighting again.” When asked if they know what issues the politicians fight about, one said, “Not really, I



just don't pay attention because all they do it fight." As such, many viewers had seen Korean politicians in the United States engage in sharp verbal disagreements.

Interviewees discussed how dangerous it is to have the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Koreans in politics in America. One 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewee said, "they just want the prestige and fame." Another also suggested that 1<sup>st</sup> generations should not be in politics. "I don't think the 1<sup>st</sup> generations should be in politics here. They are old-school, they were educated in Korea went to college there so their mentality is so Korean." Another said,

I think leadership is the biggest issue. I think in this Korean community, people use their Korean association as a tool to become successful. I'm sure there are exceptions but people get involved without any background or knowledge...just for the title...unless people change and not get involved for the sake of reputation...there are even people who go to Korea to get into politics there. It really shouldn't be that way.

One interviewee who recently discontinued his activities in one of the associations said, "they [people in associations] don't think about what is right for the people and wrong for the people, rather, they think about what is right for me or wrong for me." As such, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Koreans getting involved in politics for prestigious and reputation was well known by older generation interviewees.

Some were opposed to having the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Koreans in politics because of their Korean ways of doing things. One interviewee said,

Actually people who are in politics here really come from low levels...whenever there is an issue, they are busy creating factions. They get into factions based on

school ties. Even though I have been in there for 10 years, there is no way of getting through to that. I just become friends with people like me.

Because he did not graduate from prestige schools in Korea, he was unable to gain power to influence the group.

Another reason for the distrust toward Korean associations was corruption. One interviewee said, “They are full of corruption and they have to lie all the time. For all I know, there isn’t one honest person in politics. It’s so corrupted. You won’t believe how much money goes around in the back...” One interviewee discussed how she personally lost her trust toward Korean associations.

This happened a while back...one association approached me and told me that they were thinking about building a Korean center, like the YMCA, and wanted a donation. I thought it would be such a good idea so I donated a large sum to the organization. They never ended up building the center and they didn’t personally come to me to inform me of that nor did they return the donation.

Although she did not tell me the exact amount, as a businesswoman at that time, she said she donated, “as much as she could.” Another interview said,

Korean men care about prestige and fame a lot. But, really you have to get your hands dirty to become a president of something. There are benefits to it, though. Let’s say you become the president of a Taekwondo association here in America, the title is also recognized in Korea. Also, you get a certificate for being the president and you can use it for your purpose. Let’s say you own a Taekwondo academy, you can use the title to advertise your business and people will come to yours instead of small ones.

On the contrary, individuals involved in Korean associations viewed themselves very positively. While members of the Korean association who participated in the interview request acknowledged the general sentiments Koreans in America had on Korean associations in the DC area, they were not as concerned about the perception, as they were more concerned about the future of the Korean community. One of them said,

We are doing what we need to do, which is to strengthen the community so that it becomes a more dynamic cultural and political center for Koreans living in the area. I can't comment on what other associations are doing with their time and resources but we are doing what we can.

As the representative of one of the largest and longest running Korean associations in the area, he described some of the activities they have been engaged in as an association.

Yes, I do understand there could be misunderstanding, most of the things we do here happen privately. Recently, a Korean shop owner in the Baltimore area was shot and the shooter ran away so I had to visit local police department to put pressure on them so that they could find the shooter quicker. Luckily they found the shooter so we had a press conference. If you read the newspaper you'll see an article sometime soon. These things are unpredictable...we make decisions to help or not based on whether or not the exchange will bring mutual interest on both parties.

Moreover, on the purpose of having a Korea association itself, the association representative said,

Whenever we make a decision we consider several things. Is this going to help the Korean community? We intend on doing work that concerns the Korean diaspora.

We recently conducted a survey online. The question asked, “What would you like to have us spend our resources on the most? The survey is still open but I think so far, most voted to spend the resources on our 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. So we are planning on doing more events for our next generation. We already started an internship program and more will follow to help their needs.

Yet another representative of another association was in defense of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation and their pursuit of prestige.

You see all the hardships the 1<sup>st</sup> generation had to go through when they settled here...all they did here is work to raise their children. For people who have business in downtown Baltimore, every day is a war. They don't even wear nice clothes and drive nice cars to Baltimore, they save those for church on Sundays.

There is no respect, no recognition for them.

Therefore, he understood why the 1<sup>st</sup> generation wanted to have a “title,” so they can gain some respect.

The younger generation's pessimism toward the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Koreans doing politics in America was much milder. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewee understandingly said, “They want to feel good about their accomplishment and want respect for their accomplishment.” Some were not even aware, “I don't think I have anything to do with politics. I think politicians are in a different world.” Yet another said, “I personally don't know but I had a friend whose parents were well-connected and they would tell me about Korean associations doing this and that. From them, I heard about all the corruption and what goes on in there.” Also, some second-generation college-age interviewees, whose

parents were not involved in Korean churches were unaware of Korean associations in the DC area.

The interviews revealed that the 1<sup>st</sup> generations were looking forward for the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations Koreans' involvement in politics. The 1<sup>st</sup> generation saw the younger generation capable of bridging the gap between the American mainstream and the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. One interviewee said, "I think the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations really need to venture out, the elites especially. I think it's right for the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations to get involved [in politics]...but not 1<sup>st</sup> generations." She reasoned this was because it's hard to change their tendencies. She further added, "the 1<sup>st</sup> generation needs to finish the "carry-out" and "cleaners" at their generation and the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation needs to reach out to the mainstream." One 1<sup>st</sup> generation stressed the importance of educating the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.

I think how the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations are raised is very important. That varies by individual because it really has to do with how their parents raised them. Many have been exposed to the American culture, so their Korean values have gotten weak. The 1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations all think differently and the gap will only get wider. So, their upbringing is the key. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation should be able to overcome the handicaps the 1<sup>st</sup> generation has.

As such, some stressed the importance of educating the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation right, so they could be the next generation of leaders.

However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations were not interested in Korean politicians. They would not support Korean politicians in America "just for their ethnicity" but "would support anyone who shares the same concerns and issues," which do not necessarily have to do with ethnicity. A few other 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewees also shared similar views.

No 2<sup>nd</sup> generation showed their concern to serve the Korean community through political engagement in the near future and did not agree that Korean politicians in America should support the Korean community just because of their ethnic background.

### *Women on politics*

The interviews revealed that women interviewees were not as interested in politics as the men were. Twenty Korean women ages ranging from 18-61 were interviewed and only three of the interviewees showed interest in this topic. One of them was a second-generation mother who has five children with a Republican Party affiliation. She said, “I just can’t seem to join in most of the discourse...there is such a huge difference in how people generally vote and how I vote. So, there are so many issues I have to fight with. I don’t think I’m ready to fight with everything. Not yet.” Though she has taken a stand on some issues, she vented her frustration on Democrats during the interview.

Another woman interviewee was born and raised in Korea; she received her college education in Korea, and her law degree in American. She is married to a second generation and has two children. She has been politically active in the Korean community by raising funds to send to commemorate former president Noh in South Korea. She called her personal contacts and sent letters and had about 1,000 people donating to the nonprofit organization. She also hopes to be more active to help the North Koreans. Throughout the interview, she said, “I’m not really active” and “I do what I can do” to help those who cannot voice opinion themselves.

Another 1.5 generation women discussed how she enjoys talking about political issues with her boss and parents-in-law. She said,

I like to talk about those things...I discuss my views with my in-laws and my manager...just yesterday, I talked about the presidential election. I asked him, "so, the presidential election is coming up, what are you going to go?" I learn a lot from him...he doesn't compromise his convictions...so I like to bring up the topic when I get a chance. I'm really curious as to how he is going to view the election.

When asked how she has been active she says,

I wouldn't say I am active but when I disagree with something, I'm the kind of person to say something about it. Some time ago my church pastor was telling us not to support Obama because he was supporting gay marriage. So after the sermon I went up to him and told him that he shouldn't be discussing those issues during the sermon. Everyone has different political views and you shouldn't brainwash someone just because he/she has a different point of view.

As such, she discussed how she has voiced her political views.

However, other women interviewees did not show much interest or concern for political engagement. When probing one mother who does not vote yet who was encouraging her children to be politically active, she exclaimed. "I don't know! It's just not fun!" And another 1.5 generation woman said, "ha-ha you know. It's not very interesting!" others comments were: "Aren't women usually not interested in these issues?" "I know men usually talk about these things but when I'm with other women at church, we usually don't get to discuss political issues." Similar comments were echoed by women interviewees.

Other women discussed how they do not have opportunities to engage in conversations related to politics. Although women who attend group Bible studies at

their churches have a chance to listen to men talk about politics, they discussed how they usually listened rather than engage in conversations with men. One woman discussed how she asks questions if there is something that interests her, but she usually resorted to just listening. One college student said she usually asks questions to her dad if she is curious or doesn't understand political issues. Another woman discussed how she talks about political issues with her husband but not with any other persons because she didn't want to create any friction with others. "I never bring it [discussion about political issues] at work...it's just expected that we don't discuss those things at work." She continued, "even when I go visit my parents...my mom talks about it all the time but I don't discuss with her." Because she has different political views from her mother, she only discusses her concerns with her husband and or keeps it to herself.

### *Double standards on politics*

The interviews revealed that interviewees' had double standards when it came to political engagement. One parent who was very interested in raising politically conscious children said,

I want her [her daughter] to be in a position where she can openly voice her opinion and that's how I want to raise my two kids. I'd like them to be really involved in the government. They don't have to be in politics but I want them to be a part of a decision-making group where their voices will be heard as to taxes or environment....that's how I'd like to raise my kids.

However, she confesses that's not the way she has been living. She further added, "But I don't like to get involved in politics. I have this mentality. I don't vote at all because there are electoral voters whose votes are counted so even if I vote I don't think my vote



will be counted. So I'm thinking why do I even bother?" As such, this parent discussed how she has "double standards" when it comes to political engagement.

Another mother also discussed how she tells her kids to be vocal about their beliefs at school if something does not agree with them. However, she discussed she does not raise her issues because "when you start fighting with something then you gotta fight about everything. And, I'm not a fighter." Therefore, while some parents were encouraging their children to do one thing, they were not giving examples for the children to follow.

Some of the elderly interviewees also had double standards when it came to political engagement. One interviewee in her sixties said, "I'm embarrassed to say this, but I know someone who really had a difficult time serving his jury duty because of his English. Seeing what he had to go through...I gave up my rights to vote so that I could be excused from jury duty." Although she has lived in America for more than 20 years, she still was not confident about her English, so she gave up her rights and duty as a citizen. Another interviewee said, "I heard that the Vietnamese are really active politically. We Koreans should also be politically active and go out to vote." Yet, when asked how many times she has voted, she disclosed how she never voted ever, since she became a citizen twenty years ago. Yet, they wanted to encourage others to vote and be more politically active.

However reasons why the interviewees wanted others to be active were not because they were more capable or knowledgeable, but simply because they are not the "type to be active" or other personal issues. One interviewee who became a citizen about

15 years ago said, “I’m a shy person...I just grew up that way. Actually my generation grew up that way.” Another interviewee said,

I used to work at a voluntary center and I’ve seen so many people who don’t have a good conscious. They don’t need Medicare, but they are cheating their income and properties so they would get the benefits. They give away their money to their children...they come with their Lexus and Prada bags and yet come to the center so they could get the Medicare. Some of these people are just clueless; they don’t even have the basic civic consciousness.

In such a way, this interviewee did not perceive other Koreans to be honest or mature citizens, and negative perception of others did not encourage her to be more active to set a good example.

The biggest reason for this double standard seemed to have stemmed from the language barriers. The elderly woman who gave up her rights to vote did so primarily because of the language barrier. Others, especially the elderly who came as adults, discussed how they still face difficulties communicating in English. However, many interviewees did not raise their language barriers until much later in the interview. Perhaps because they considered this barrier as an embarrassment, many interviewees laughed as they addressed the English barrier. Therefore, the language barrier has inhibited many from becoming politically active. The woman who gave up her rights to vote discussed how embarrassed she is for having done that; however, she does not regret having done that because the humility that comes from her not speaking English fluently is much greater than the humility of having turned down her rights as an American citizen.

One interviewee on the language barrier said, “it’s important to not lose face; people feel ashamed for not having the language ability.” His articulation well illustrates the Korean culture and the importance of not losing one’s face to preserve one’s self-esteem.

### *Church and politics*

Interviews revealed that interviewees’ religious affiliations had an influence on the ways in which interviewees’ perceived political engagement. First, some church leaders wanted to maintain distance with politics and political engagement. One of the reasons was due to the fear of churches leading political movements or becoming too involved in political issues. One pastor explained how in the past, liberal theology that emphasized the freedom for the oppressed being marginalized has prompted and led social movements. Because he did not think religious leaders ought to lead social movements and become intertwined with the politics, he did not want to stress politics at his church. He further added,

Korean are from a collective society and the power from collectivity is strong...especially the churches. Korean churches in America serve various purposes and its power is strong; it also has power to influence the media...so what churches do could bring a number of changes in this immigrant society. Therefore, we need to set examples. But...it’s so easy for priorities to get mixed up...if churches care about civic and political engagement it’s so easy to lose that balance and fairness. They could easily become the center of the church.

Therefore, he did not think the church should be at the forefront of political engagement nor encourage his members to become active in political activities.

Another pastor showed his opposition by giving an example. A few years ago, a Korean politician affiliated to a Korean association had asked him to encourage his members to vote; the politician rented a bus so that members could come to the registration center to vote. And, because the politician asked the pastor to persuade the members to vote for him, the pastor decided to keep his distance from politics since then. While other pastors also agreed that Koreans need to build more political presence in the area, they all agreed that religious organizations needn't be so close to the political sphere.

Yet, the Korean associations had an opposing view on the marriage between politics and religion. A member of a Korean association spoke about the importance of churches in their role to educate and inform their members. He said, while persuading a view is wrong, providing information to members as churches that are the center of socialization for many Koreans in the area, is critical to educate Koreans who would otherwise be misinformed or uninformed. He also discussed how he has called number of churches to talk to pastors and that many had agreed with him on this aspect.

Another said,

We [Korean associations and Korean churches] have different interests and different ideologies so we can't agree on issues 100%. What we can do together is raise money to help Haiti or sponsor events that are apolitical such as the Korean Independence Day. No one would oppose to that idea. One thing I have noticed is that as churches grow their civic and political engagement becomes less. They build their fences...they try to find self-fulfillment through their church activities. As he said this, although he seemed reluctant that many Korean churches have taken their backseat in political engagement, he put the situation in a positive light.

Ultimately, results revealed that several factors influenced the ways members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of political engagement. Members of the Koreans diaspora were found to have a weak sense of ownership and a strong distrust toward the Korean associations in the area; other factors such as parental and elderly status, as well as the double standard that arises from language barriers were also found to influence how they made meaning of political engagement. Others factors also included the conflicts that arise from church interest.

Results of the research question that addressed how members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of political engagement suggested that the Korean diaspora's experiences varied and made meaning of political engagement depending on their experiences with gender, age, generational type, parental status, English ability, church interest, and sense of ownership as American citizens, and most of all, their negative perception on politics.

#### **Research Question 4**

***RQ4: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of the relationship between social capital and civic and political engagement of the Korean Diaspora?***

The religious and community social capitals were found to influence the civic and political engagement. These themes are discussed below.

##### ***Religious social capital on civic and political engagement***

Interviews revealed that religious social capital influenced the civic engagement of the interviewees in several ways. First, the church network was found to be an importance source of information for civic engagement. Interviewees found opportunities and were able to participate in civic activities through their Korean church. One pastor

spoke about the civic engagement she has done with her youth group students for a number of years.

We raised money to help the victims of the tsunami<sup>3</sup>. We collected change. So each youth group cell got a jar and I told them to collect change so we can send it off as soon as possible. We collected about \$300 and we sent the money to support them. We did one for Haiti...we did a car wash and a yard sale. Actually for Haiti<sup>4</sup> the churches united because we don't have resources.

In such a way, she provided opportunities for the youth group members to participate in civic engagement. Another interviewee discussed how his church raised \$20,000 to help the needs in Haiti and he combined his with the funds raised from a Korean association; around \$30,000 were raised and sent.

The churches were also found to bring opportunities for civic engagement in the local areas. One youth pastor also discussed how she got the youth group involved in DC clean up days.

I live in the B County and I've registered my church for volunteer opportunities a couple years ago...my youth kids can receive community service hours through these activities. I received the training and so I get emails. Sometimes, I post something like, "my church youth kids are looking for voluntary services" or I get emails about opportunities. So, it works both ways.

As such, she has been active in connecting the church with the locals.

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<sup>3</sup> Tsunami: On Sunday 26, December 2004, a megathrust earthquake occurred off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history, killing over 230,000 people in fourteen countries (National Geographic News).

<sup>4</sup> On Tuesday 12, January 2010, a catastrophic magnitude 7.0 earthquake occurred near the town of Leogane, Haiti. IT is estimated that 316,000 had died and affected three million people (Basu, 2010).

Another interviewee discussed how she attended a hearing to request C County to allow her church to build a new establishment. Many from her church had attended the hearing collectively so that the voice of the church could be heard to the members of the local area. She discussed how it was her first time attending such an event.

Other than the social capital from church, there seemed to be plenty of social capital from the Christian network that influences civic engagement of the interviewees. One pastor discussed,

So I listen to the radio often, of course its Christian radio station. And there is a segment where attorneys come and discuss laws and what not. They talk about a lot of issues like Christians being persecuted in America because of their faith. I was listening to that story one day and I got a call from the station asking to participate in a survey concerning that issue. So I signed the petition, did the survey and donated for the cause.

Another 1.5 generation interviewee was found to pray for the country and the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Koreans on regular basis. She said, “So when I went to this Christian conference, I signed up to be added to a listserv. Since then, I get updates on issues related to Christians and also I get prayer requests so I can pray for them.”

Yet, several interviewees discussed their involvement with the Korean Christian Coalition network such as Match Strike. This annual Christian conference targeting young Korean Americans in the area has been held for the past 12 years. It has functioned as a big network to bring Korean-descent Christians together to pray for the country. Several interviewees were or had been actively involved in this revival conference. Two interviewees were currently on the advisory board of this nonprofit organization and

discussed how the conference has brought coalition amongst many young Koreans as well as churches in the area.

However, when it came to political engagement, Korean churches were found to be inactive in influencing members of the Korean diaspora. One pastor said, “To tell you the trust...kids don’t know what’s going on. They learn at school but so many are in the dark. So I bring up the issues. I’d watch CNN and tell kids what’s going on but some really don’t have any ideas. But really, I don’t know that much either so.” As such, although the pastor has played an important role, because of her limitations she was unable to teach political issues consistently. Also, she was found to be only one trying to educate her students; other pastors did not share similar experiences.

The Korean community as social capital was also found to have influenced civic and political engagement for the members of the Korean diaspora. Because many 1<sup>st</sup> generations face the language barrier, they were heavily relying on the Korean-language press for information concerning civic and political issues. Many discussed how much they pay attention to the *Koreadaily (Joongang ilbo)*, [one of the most widely circulated Korean-language newspapers in America]<sup>5</sup>. In fact, when I visited Virginia for interviews, I saw newsstands in almost all the Korean stores (e.g., hair salons, groceries, restaurants, Taekwondo academy). Often next to the *Joongang ilbo* stand, were other weekly materials such as *The Korean Weekly* [weekly publication; distributes about 7000 copies in Virginia and Maryland], *Miju-news* [weekly publication], and *Korean American* [monthly publication published by a private sector] that addresses various issues that concern Koreans living in America including politics. There are 2 daily, 3-4 weekly and 1-2 monthly newspapers in the Washington, DC, area. There were also fliers and

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<sup>5</sup> Number of subscribers for the *Koreadaily* and all others were undisclosed due to the company policy.



newsletters from local churches and businesses. As such, Koreans living near Korean stores simply had to visit the stores to pick up the latest newspapers/press to gather information on civic and political engagement. Also, Virginia residents have the luxury of enjoying a Korean channel as well as a Korean language radio channel. However, due to a plethora of resources, interviewees were found to be interested in political news of Korea not of American.

The younger generations were found to rely on other resources to gather information concerning civic and political engagement. “I read the news on my smartphone...I’m a conservative so I watch Fox.” Many other interviewees were also found to be Republicans. One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation when asked where he gets his resources said,

Why do you ask me that? [laughing]...honestly I watch Fox channel ...I watch it sometimes...Larry King Live or Bill O’Reilly. I don’t watch...because some are good and some shift left to right...some people are too extreme. I get a sense that they are skewing the truth so...I don’t watch those any more. I just watch the news.

Another 2<sup>nd</sup> generation also discussed how he only watches Fox for news to gather information concerning politics.

Other 1<sup>st</sup> generations who read Korean newspapers were also found to read *chosun ilbo* and *hankook ilbo*, both conservative presses. One 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewee discussed how he only reads articles from the *Christianity Daily* online. He said, “I sometimes read from other resources but I mostly rely on *Christianity Daily*...I don’t have much time to read from other sites.” As such, many interviewees, perhaps because

of their religious views were found to be conservative and relied on the conservative press for information on political engagement.

Only one interviewee said that he reads news articles from both sides to gather unbiased information. “I read from major newspapers on line...I’m interested in world politics. I also download sources from experts’ blogs. The world is changing so fast these days...I want to understand who is in control.” His need to seek neutral and accurate information prompted him to gather information from different sources.

There was one interviewee who was a liberal Christian:

Well. I think I am Liberal even though I’m a Christian. When it comes to gay marriage and abortion, I don’t think you can say no to everything. These are big issues and there are exceptions. We shouldn’t say no just because. I think I have been like this ever since I can remember...I don’t think I like the Republicans.

When it comes their stance on the right to bear arms...and the benefits they bring to the rich. Seeing them make issues about the health care just makes me mad.

I’m sure they have their reasons, but I think at some point they have to do what needs to be done for the country.

Her sources of information were the CNN and BBC.

Except the 1.5 generation interviewee above, interviewees who were affiliated to churches were strong Republicans who were opposed to gay marriage and abortion. One 1.5 generation said, “I’m interested in the issues of abortion. I have a lot to say. I got interested at first because I knew a person...he was born because his mother did not abort him. I heard him talk about his story and was so moved. He was a Christian too. I’m a strong opponent so when I get a chance I want to talk more about it.” A number of

interviewees, when discussing their political views mentioned gay marriage and their oppositions.

*Community social capital on civic and political engagement*

Also, the interviews revealed that family members were important social capital that influences civic and political engagement of the interviewees. A number of young 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewees were not interested in politics or political engagement. When they were asked if their parents discuss political issues at home, most of them said no. In fact, during the interview, a number of 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees said apologetically, “none of my kids vote...I think the fault is mine. I haven’t taught them by setting a good example. They need to see their parents vote to think that they ought to vote as well. But I don’t. I’m sorry [laughing].” In such a way, a number of 1<sup>st</sup> generations also apologized for not having taught their children as well as they were supposed to.

The interviews revealed that members of the Korean diaspora were disappointed with the lack of Koreans’ political engagement in general. One 1<sup>st</sup> generation said, “We don’t have fair representation. I’m sure we’ve been discriminated against because our community is so weak and we don’t really voice our opinions.” Other 1<sup>st</sup> generations shared similar views. “If we have more Korean in leadership position...when we are [the Korean community] in a disadvantageous situations we’d be heard. For people who only have a Greencard...that’d be very helpful.” Another 1<sup>st</sup> generation said,

For Koreans, having connection is really important. If we know people who are in leadership position, we’d be more likely to receive help from them...if you know someone who can do something about it, you’d be more likely to voice your opinion...because something is more likely to get done through an acquaintance.

In these ways, a number of 1<sup>st</sup> generations expressed their regrets for having weak ethnic community and the need to have a stronger community to help those in need.

Yet others, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation interviewees shared their concern for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations' lack of civic and political engagement. One interviewee said,

I don't think the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations are interested in politics...I think we [the 1<sup>st</sup> generation] need to self-examine...we haven't really done much for them. That's why they are not willing to admit to their Korean roots. If we grow [the Korean community] and become stronger, I think we'd be bigger help for them.

Other also expressed their sympathy for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, as they are neither Korean nor American, and emphasized the need to educate them and instill in them a stronger sense of belonging so they could grow up as stronger citizens in America.

Another also shared her concerns as she saw many 2<sup>nd</sup> generations denying their Korean roots.

So many 2<sup>nd</sup> generations say they are Americans. But they don't really have a sense of belonging. Some of the high school kids I've seen don't like America that much either...and they consider Korea as their parents' country. At some point, they have to accept their Korean heritage. I think if they are in any way associated with the Korean community, they will not say they are 100% Americans.

In such a way, she explained how the Korean community is losing the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Koreans.

On discussing why the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations are inactive in terms of their civic and political engagement, the responses varied. One interviewee reasoned not having provided a strong foundation.

Yeah, I think we need to have a stronger Korean community here especially when 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations are now becoming more vocal...but in order for them to be more vocal they need strong support. But, I don't think there is that foundation, even I don't do anything to support Korean community...and I don't think a lot of people realize that. There is only a handful who are conscious and supportive... One 1<sup>st</sup> generation discussed issues 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation experience growing up as an American with Korean heritage,

I think there are a lot of problems within Korean families because the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations had to grow up so fast, becoming heads of the household when they were still young...and not being totally Korean nor American...it must have been really hard for them...they must have also suffered from inferiority complexes.

And kids who grew up in that kind of environment must have struggled a lot...parents struggling to make a living and them watching their parents struggle.

In similar vein, one interviewee attributed the cause to the lack of communication between the parents and the children as well as the control the 1<sup>st</sup> generations have in the community. He said,

The parents and children can't communicate with one another...their language is different and they were raised under different educational system...so they can't be mixed. And that extends into the society, so the Korean community continues to have problems. And, the Korean community is now predominantly run by the

1st generation, and the 2nd generations are not really active...they can't be active as long as the 1<sup>st</sup> generation is in control.

In fact, one 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewee said how her parents have influenced her lack of political engagement. She said,

Of course I'd like them [her parents] to get involved and be more active in this society. But I don't know...because of the language barrier and the cultural difference...they don't think they can fit in and they fear making mistakes...if something happens, then they think they can't do it. They are really afraid of making silly mistakes.

Yet, several 1<sup>st</sup> generations were optimistic of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations' political engagement. One interviewee discussed how there are several 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Korean politicians in the House of Representatives in several states, one of which, Virginia. "I think Steve Geam in Virginia is the only runner up for the next election. This is great! I believe we'll soon see a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Korean in Congress." As such, he was optimistic of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation's political engagement.

One 2<sup>nd</sup> generation on the political engagement of Koreans said,

Koreans in government is also important; it gives you more fair representation of your group. Government workers are decision-makers essentially...wouldn't they have some influence on Korean American interest? I would think so...so I think more people should go toward government positions. I think they need to be more dispersed. Not just doctors or lawyers.

As such, some showed enthusiasm in the political involvement of Koreans in the government sector in the near future.

Results of the research question that addresses how the social capital influences civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora suggest that religion and the Korean community's social capital influence civic and political engagement. The interviews revealed that the Christian networks as well as print materials also encourage civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora. However, interviews suggest that the 1<sup>st</sup> generation perceives the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation to lack civic and political engagement and attributes the cause to the weak Korean community.

In the following section, I will discuss the implication of each theme, explore ways in which the results contribute to theory and practice, present theoretical propositions regarding social capital, and civic and political engagement of ethnically diverse publics, discuss the limitations of the study and propose several directions for future research.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

This exploratory dissertation research sought to understand how members of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area make meaning of social capital, and how this social capital is used in the process of civic and political engagement. The literature review suggested the need to examine the social capital of ethnically diverse publics, and the lack of the relationship between social capital and civic and political engagement of ethnic minorities. Also, the literature review exposed a dearth of research on the influence of communicative social capital on civic and political engagement. To examine these aspects, I interviewed members of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area of varying ages, gender, years in America, occupations, religious affiliation, legal status and cultural identities in order to understand how they define and identify social capital

and make meaning of civic and political engagement from their experiences and perspectives. Their stories revealed that social capital from their church and community network, in combination with their lived experiences, influences their everyday lives and their perceptions of civic and political engagement, to either encourage or inhibit civic and political engagement in America.

In this chapter, I will examine the implications of my research findings and propose ways to understand communicative social capital in relation to civic and political engagement for the Korean diaspora. Furthermore, I will discuss how this dissertation builds upon previous research on social capital, civic and political engagement, explore the contributions to scholars who examine the Korean diaspora, social capital, and civic and political engagement of ethnically diverse publics, and point to new directions for the research of social capital and civic and political engagement of ethnically diverse publics.

### **Implications**

The first research question sought to understand how the Korean diaspora makes meaning of their ethnic community. It addressed how members of the Korean diaspora define and perceive their ethnic social enclave. The findings suggest that members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of the Korean community in relation to their cultural identity and that their affiliation with Korean churches influenced the way they defined and perceived their community. Also, the results revealed that both culture and obligation to religious affiliation had drawbacks for the members of the Korean diaspora.

Implications of each theme related to the ways in which the Korean diaspora makes meaning of ethnic community are discussed below.



Members of the Korean diaspora were identified as holding varying cultural identities. Some who came to America as adults identified themselves as the 1<sup>st</sup> generation or FOBs (fresh off the boat); these individuals were more familiar with the Korean ways of doing things and the Korean language regardless of the number of years in America. Those who came in their adolescent years were familiar with both the Korean and American cultures and languages; they identified themselves as 1.5 generation. Then, there were individuals who came to America at an early age (e.g., mostly before 5 years of age) or born in America, and they were more familiar with American ways of doing things and identified themselves as 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. There were a couple individuals who identified themselves as the 1.7 generation; they had come to America when they were 7 and 9, respectively, and were familiar with the Korean culture more than those who identified themselves as the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation or “twinkie” (yellow on the outside and white on the inside).

How the members of the Korean diaspora made meaning of the Korean community varied depending on the cultural identity. The 1<sup>st</sup> generations are the individuals who settled in America and were found to have relied much on the Korean community in the Washington, DC, area. Familiarity with the culture, language and values provided moral support as well as physical support when they first arrived in America. Therefore, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generations perceived the Korean community as important, valuable if not necessary for the Korean diaspora in the area. However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations were found to hold opposing views of the Korean community. As they lack the cultural knowledge and language skills, some have had negative experiences for not having enough understanding of the Korean culture and were neglected by the 1<sup>st</sup>

generation. Therefore, a strong chasm between the two generations was evident throughout the interviews.

At the center of the conflict were Korean churches. Similar to previous studies' findings, a majority of the interviewees I found were affiliated with local Korean churches. Because Korean churches in America serve as an important site for socialization for the Korean diaspora, a majority of the stories interviewees told me were in relation to their Korean churches. Therefore, in describing the Korean community, interviewees who were affiliated to churches used church and community interchangeably; church was their community and second home for a number of interviewees.

There were differences across generations on their perception of the Korean churches. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation's perception of the Korean community was largely shaped by their experiences from their Korean churches. As a majority of the pastors and members are Korean speaking, lack of attention to the English-speaking members has not been so positive. However, because many 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generations find comfort in sharing the culture, values and language in their Korean churches, their perception of the Korean community through their experiences in Korean churches have been positive.

However, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generations have also experienced some drawbacks through their church affiliation. The churches' highly time-consuming activities, as well as others' noisiness have alerted some to keep a safe distance from church members for their privacy. Also, more time spent at their church meant less time to spend outside of the church network; therefore, some 1.5 generations were conscious of the lost opportunities to socialize elsewhere.

Therefore, while contesting the benefits and drawback of their ethnic community, members of the Korean diaspora also discussed reasons for keeping the Korean community. While some lamented the lack of 1<sup>st</sup> generations' vision for a strong community, many 1<sup>st</sup> generations discussed the importance of keeping the community for the sake of supporting the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. Moreover, many discussed the importance of strengthening vision, community assets, as well as the leadership so that the community could help the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation find their cultural roots. On the contrary, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations opposed this idea of creating a "Korea" in the area.

The findings suggest that members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of their ethnic community based on their personal experiences and needs. Therefore, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generations who can "gratify their need for inclusion, significance, social status, respect and power" (Kim, 2011) perceive the Korean community positively through their lived experiences in church community. According to Sheba George (1998), there is compensatory dynamic at play for members of the congregation, especially for male members, so they could reclaim the power and respect that they were deprived of upon immigrating. However, there is no compensatory dynamic for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations who are more familiar with the American ways of doing things, respect should flow both ways, and they should be treated as equal bodies. However, they are often treated as children by the 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrants (Kim, 2011) because for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, as "their religion becomes the primary venue through which they attain a sense of belonging and a meaningful resolution to their identity crisis (Kim, 2011, p. 72), personal experiences at church become critical in securing a sense of belonging and cultural identities. Therefore, when the sense of belonging and cultural identity struggles

are not secured through church experiences the struggling 2<sup>nd</sup> generation's experiences could become intense and their perception toward church could only be negative.

Therefore, the ways in which the Korean community or Korean churches were perceived by the members of the Korean diaspora were starkly different depending on how members of the Korean diaspora identified themselves culturally.

In terms of the church network, while it may seem homogeneous, tight-knit, and collectivistic, it was not as strong as it seemed because members experienced personal conflicts. Too much attention to their privacy prompted members to keep a safe distance between members. Also, because everyone was busy with their lives, members of the Korean diaspora were not as collectivistic in nature as one would assume. Rather, some even argued that Koreans are more individualistic than Americans but simply hide their individualistic tendencies to avoid attention.

Moreover, the time- and energy-demanding church activities, although these activities bring people together, were also considered a drawback because they consumed too much personal time away from family, friends and other opportunities. Therefore, from the network perspective, these church activities led to strong, narrow, and homogeneous network. While strong ties could provide job opportunities (Granovetter, 1978) it could lead to limited resources as information depleted quicker between strong ties due to frequent interactions. Therefore, results suggest that while Korean churches provided many benefits, depletion of information and opportunities as well as high demand for tight-knit networks could have created internal conflicts. These drawbacks are understood to have influenced the ways in which members made meaning of the church community negatively.

Because of their high time- and effort-demanding activities as well as their strong attachment to the ethnic culture, the Korean churches brought members of the Korean diaspora together by offering gathering places, thereby, unifying the community while constraining the Korean diaspora from branching out to other networks or communities. While churches served as educational institutions for teaching the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Korean culture and language, it also exposed the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation to some tendencies that were not favorably perceived by the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation such as creating homogenous and insular groups. However, it is uncertain to what extent Korean culture influenced social cohesion and constraints as well as other roles of Korean churches. More specifically, further examination is needed on whether it is the culture or the religion that brings social cohesion as well as constraints to the Korean diaspora, in addition to the interaction between those two aspects that create differing roles of churches in Korean communities.

Also, the interview responses suggest growing problems in the Korean community at large. Some of the problems that were pointed out were weak leadership, lack of the 1<sup>st</sup> generations' vision and their individualistic tendencies (i.e., focusing more on individual interests and themselves rather than on the community). The results suggest these issues have been long harboring and that these issues could further create greater problems for the community in the long run.

Interview responses revealed that generation, familiarity with Korean and American culture and language, and the degree of affiliation added depth and complication to the Korean diaspora's meaning making of ethnic community. All interviewees were found to make meaning of ethnic community differently: the cultural identities were influenced by place of birth, native language and culture and this cultural

identity influenced the ways in which they made meaning of ethnic community. Also, interviewees' experiences in Korean churches also shaped the ways they made meaning of ethnic community. Moreover, interviewees' affiliation to the Korean church and the amount of activities one was involved in also influenced the ways they perceived the church community. Results suggest that 2<sup>nd</sup> generations paired the high demand of the Korean ways of doing things with too much demand for church service could increase their negative perception of the ethnic community. Also, results illustrate how the 1<sup>st</sup> generations in their individualistic ways of doing things and their pursuit for a compensatory dynamic could bring more drawbacks to the Korean community at large. These findings offer a new lens through which the members of the Korean diaspora experience, relate to and interpret the Korean community.

The second research question sought to examine how members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of social capital and how the community creates opportunities for social capital. It addressed how the members of the Korean diaspora define, identify and use social capital in their daily lives. The results suggest that the utilization of social capital varied by level of analysis; that is, there was more social capital available for individuals in comparison to group level. In terms of creating opportunities for social capital for the Korean diaspora, they were conflicted with previous findings on the production process of social capital in some respect. Whereas previous research suggest social capital is created and accumulated through social interaction, which then creates opportunities for trust, cooperation, in the case of the Korean diaspora, as trust and cooperation is embedded within the Korean culture, mere membership to an organization created opportunities to enjoy social capital for its members. Also, results suggest that

members of the Korean diaspora pull social capital largely from three networks: church, community and family. And, as result of their faith, more were interested in offering their social capital to others rather than using an organization's accumulated social capital for their own good. The results also suggested that social capital were not available to all equality, especially to those who face language and cultural barriers.

Social capital from the Korean churches was wide-ranging and readily available. The beneficiaries of the social capital from the Korean churches were primarily the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generations, as they needed much help to settle in America. As they are unfamiliar with American culture and system, many visited Korean churches to gather information and receive help. Other than social capital in terms of information and physical help, there were intangible resources such as cultural social capital. This was in line with previous studies, where a majority of research has highlighted the church's role in providing social and cultural services for the immigrant community (Chai, 1998; I. Kim, 1981; Min, 1992).

As predominant pastors and members of congregations were Korean speaking, most of the churches were operated in the Korean way. Because of the members' Korean ways of doing things, members of the Korean diaspora affiliated to churches were found to provide loyalty and trust, cooperation to act collectively as a group to the church and other members of church. However, this was different from previous research findings on social capital. While studies have found that social interactions were found to create opportunities for trust and cooperation and a mutually supportive environment in voluntary associations (Putnam, 1993), in the case of Korean churches, gatherings with other Koreans itself created an environment of trust, cooperation and mutually supportive

environment. Hence, members of Korean churches could enjoy the social capital churches offers by virtue of memberships.

The church social capital was also combined with Christian values. Studies found that connections created by faith are powerful social capital generators (Ecklund, 2006; Putnam, 2000). As result, many members were found to be more interested in giving and sacrificing one's own social capital for others. As Christianity values serving and loving others, members, especially the 1<sup>st</sup> generations, were concerned about ways to offer one's resources for the benefit of others. Perhaps, because they have received much, they were more concerned about sacrificing one's skills, time and energy to serve others, especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.

These findings are in line with previous research on the Korean community. In fact, Sharon Kim (2011) argues that the Korean immigrant generation perceives that it is the church's responsibility to maintain Korean culture and preservation for the next generations. These scholars argue that it is the responsibility of the church to teach the next generation cultural values and language. Yu also suggest that maintenance of ethnic identity and the preservation of the Korean culture are very important priorities for Korean Americans, perhaps even more so than for other Asian immigrants as the 2000 census revealed that Korean Americans have the third lowest level of interracial and interethnic marriage among fifteen Asian groups (Yu 2001).

However, despite these research findings, 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewees did not appreciate the value of cultural social capital provided by Korean churches. As 2<sup>nd</sup> generations sought after friendship and other helpful resources that could be applied for their use in their daily lives, cultural social capital was not appealing. Therefore, a chasm



between what is readily available for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation and what the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation sought after created misunderstanding. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation felt left out and marginalized in the Korean church community and felt that social capital was not equally distributed amongst the members.

In creating opportunities for social capital, Korean churches were found to be very active. There were plenty of opportunities for church members to network and share information. As the 1<sup>st</sup> generations have limited resources due to their language barriers, they relied heavily on church networks to gather most up-to-date information. Frequent fellowship as well as regular church services provided many opportunities for them to seek and gather information regarding education, cooking, etc.

However, there were limits to the information-gathering process for many 1<sup>st</sup> generations due to their language and cultural barriers. Especially for parents with children who attended schools, information concerning PTA meetings and other information was limited. Also, because of their language and cultural barriers, they were often misunderstood by non-Korean American parents as well as 2<sup>nd</sup> generation parents. Their lack of participation resulted in a lack of information, which caused parents to be perceived as indifferent about their children's education.

Such occurrences have been found in previous research. As tight-knit and homogeneous groups lead to limited information sharing and social capital (Granovetter, 1978), in order for these members to obtain greater social capital, they needed to tap into other social networks. However, due to the high demand of their work and church activities, they were not as flexible as they needed to accrue more social capital and information. As such, churches caused a double bind.

Social capital for the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations was much different as their familiarity with resources in English created significantly more opportunities to gather social capital. While there was less social capital from Korean churches (e.g., only cultural and language social capital), they relied on other social networks (e.g., work, Internet) to gather information and other social capital. However, in terms of social capital generated by membership to organizations, their social capital was much less than the 1<sup>st</sup> generations.

At the community level, social capital was not as great as the social capital available to members who belonged to smaller networks (e.g., church). Perhaps because the community was so spread out (i.e., DC, Maryland, and West Virginia), there was limited social capital for everyone and only those who sought social capital were able to obtain it. Also, collaboration at the community level was difficult, and the reoccurring issues were busy lives and lack of systematic structure to accumulate community assets; these were again attributed to weak leadership.

The results suggest that while Korean church communities offer plenty of social capital, it was only enough for its members and not for other members of the community. Also, social capital was found to be distributed unequally, especially to the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation as they lack the language skills or perhaps as result of their English fluency, they were not seeking social capital from the church community as desperately as the 1<sup>st</sup> generations. Nevertheless, the results suggested that social capital was limited for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation and that cultural social capital was not their primary need. As social capital cannot be quantified, it is difficult to estimate how much flows to whom; however, results suggest that many do not contribute nor benefit from the social capital of the Korean

community at large. Perhaps as interviewees felt a stronger sense of belonging to their local church rather than toward the Korean community in general, a sense of belonging and a degree of attachment also seem to come in play in creating opportunities for and in using social capital.

The third research question sought to understand how the Korean diaspora makes meaning of civic and political engagement. In terms of the civic engagement, weak consciousness of civic duties and sense of ownership influenced their civic engagement. The findings suggest that Korean churches create opportunities for civic engagement and other factors such as parental status encouraged members of the Korean diaspora to become more active in civic engagement. However, the results suggest that for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 1.5 generations, language and cultural barriers inhibit them from active involvement.

The interviewees' stories described their weak sense of ownership despite the years they have lived in America. As they came to America as adults, received most of education in Korea and are much more familiar with the Korean culture and language, their ways of thinking and sense of ownership belonged in Korea if not in either country. Also, due to their busy lives making ends meet, they could not afford to examine themselves in terms of civic engagement. Therefore, the term was very unfamiliar to some interviewees.

Despite their limitations, some individuals were prompted to reconsider their sense of ownership as their legal status changed to citizenship or Christian faith encouraged them with a renewed sense of obligation (e.g., to pray for the country). However, even to some who have had similar experiences, many still remained uninterested in civic engagement.

Nevertheless, Korean churches brought opportunities for its members to become involved in civic engagement. The types of civic engagement varied from visiting nursing homes, signing petitions, participating in DC clean-up day, to raising funds to support victims of hurricane Katrina. However, despite the interviewees' previous involvement, many had difficulties recalling their participation. Again, the primary reasons seemed to be due to weak consciousness; had they had stronger conviction that each act of civic engagement may have been more memorable. Therefore, ironically, even though many had participated in civic engagement through their local church, perhaps it was not purely "voluntary" and a majority perceived to not have been engaged at all. Another reason for this perception was because the activities were through church, a type of organization that has its own unique interest. In such a way, Korean churches encouraged civic engagement yet inhibited people from thinking the activities are civic engagement.

For some individuals, becoming parents or teachers encouraged them to be more active in civic activities. A number of parents, in wanting their children to grow up as active members of the society, exposed their children to civic engagement. Becoming parents or needing to set a good example for others was more encouraged in rethinking the need to be active.

However, despite the desire to be more active in civic engagement, some faced difficulties due to language and cultural barriers, especially the 1<sup>st</sup> generation parents who were in the dark, as they did not know *how* and *where* to start. Further, these obstacles lessened one's motivation, and cultural and language barriers often indicated limited

resources for the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. Therefore, to some individuals, the challenge of becoming active in civic engagement indicated facing an insurmountable obstacle.

In terms of the political engagement, the ways in which members of the Korean diaspora made meaning of political engagement depended on their sense of ownership, understanding of the term, and perception of politics in general and Korean associations in specific. Also, individuals' status as parents or as elderly persons changed the way the interviewees made meaning of political engagement. Moreover, church affiliation also altered the ways in which individuals made meaning of political engagement. Ultimately, the members of the diaspora did not perceive themselves to be active in political engagement.

Similar to ways interviewees discussed civic engagements, many were unfamiliar with the definition and operationalization of the term political engagement. Moreover, their lack of strong consciousness to be politically active combined with their weak sense of ownership in their country led to weak involvement. Furthermore, their strong distrust toward politics in general as experienced directly and indirectly in Korea, as well as distrust toward Korean Associations in America discouraged members of the Korean diaspora from becoming active.

Along with these factors, findings suggest that church affiliation also leads to inactive political engagement. Many interviewees, some pastors, perceived that churches should not confuse its goal with that of political goal or use churches as a tool for political movements. Previous research suggested that religious organizations have participated in social movements. Moreover, scholars suggest that congregations provide people with resources for political involvement in tangible forms such as leaders, social

networks and places to meet (Fowler, Hertzke & Olson 1999; Guth, Green, Smidt, Kellstedt & Poloma, 1997; Leege & Kellstedt, 1993; Verba et al. 1995).

However, marriage between politics and religious organization are not encouraged in Korean churches. Ecklund (2006) argued that “[Koreans] think good Christians should focus more on people’s spiritual needs by bringing others into the faith rather than being involved in community or national politics” (p. 145). However, Ecklund suggested that “none of my respondents talked specifically about creating political social movements. Yet in their narratives, I find awareness of the kind of agency, injustice and identity that are the basis of coalition building (p. 133). She further stated, “a distinct group of Korean Americans reject both noninvolvement and the passive adoption of a fairly uninvolved religious right Evangelical political agenda, in favor of looking for other paradigms that will incorporate their identities as Asian Americans, ethnic minorities, and Christians (p. 137). As such Ecklund (2006) described a unique way in which the Korean diaspora has merged religion with political interest.

The findings of this research question also revealed that many 2<sup>nd</sup> generations were not involved, despite their English proficiency and cultural understanding. This was largely due to their parents’ inactiveness. The parents’ lack of motivation and difficulties in overcoming language and cultural barriers had created a vicious cycle. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generations were without models when it came to civic and political engagement. Scholars have pointed out the importance of parental influence when it comes to political engagement.

Ecklund argued that “lacking political model from their parents, Korean Americans do not have a sense of how they might be active in meaningful ways.

(Ecklund, 2006, p. 120). Other scholars have also argued the importance of exposure and education on political engagement at an early age. Lien, Conway and Wong (2004) have argued that “political learning is a lifelong process, with beliefs and attitudes being formed and modified as a result of interaction with a myriad of socialization agents (Beck, 1974; Jennings & Markus, 1984; Sigel & Jenkins, 2001). Those agents include the family, friends, peers and schooling, the mass media, and representatives of the political system (Conway, 2000), with political education beginning in early childhood (p. 72).” Finkel (1986) and Jennings (1987) have suggested that engaging in political activities such as voting, campaigning, or protest demonstrations can influence individuals’ subsequent evaluations of internal political efficacy and ideological positions. Moreover, Zaller (1992) suggested that political awareness is a necessary condition for the formation of political attitudes and beliefs.

The findings suggest that the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation interviewees were not so privileged to have been exposed to political awareness, or exposure to political activities and education from their parents at an early age. Although they have access to other resources such as friends, church, peers, the mass media and representatives of the political systems, to what extent the parents’ influence and religious affiliation influence discourage their political engagement is uncertain.

The fourth research question sought to understand how the Korean diaspora make meaning of the relationship between social capital and the civic and political engagement. The results suggest that religious social capital, wider Christian network, and the Korean community provide a plethora of social capital for civic and political engagement. The

findings also suggest that many 1<sup>st</sup> generations are concerned about the lack of civic and political engagement of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.

Many members of the Korean diaspora were found to have rich communicative social capital, which created opportunities for civic and political engagement. Many interviewees had access to Korean print press, newspapers online, TV and radio channels in which they could gather information concerning various issues. As long as they had access to the community, anyone was capable of gathering information for civic and political engagement. However, they were found to only be interested in issues that concerned them such as Medicare or legal status.

Moreover, male members were exposed to more communicative social capital, as men were found to have more interest in politics, and they were more likely to start conversations and hear political news at church or other places more than women. Female members of the Korean diaspora were less encouraged to discuss political issues with others at work or church.

The findings suggest that the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations relied on different communicative social capital. They relied on their smartphones, the Internet and television channels such as *Fox news* for information concerning civic and political engagement. As such, lack of language and cultural barriers opened more opportunities for communicative social capital; however, as to how more communicative social capital influences actual activities were unclear.

The findings suggest that communicative social capital is intertwined with social capital and civic and political engagement for the Korean diaspora. According to the literature (Rojas et al., 2011), the organizational affiliation, personal networks, mass



media and political conversations were all found to influence civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora positively. Moreover other factors such as parental roles and the perception on politics in Korea were found to influence civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora. As all of these factors emerge through social interactions and conversations with others, communicative social capital functioned as the glue that linked social capital with civic and political engagement. In other words, to what extent members of the Korean diaspora engaged in civic and political engagement were very much related to their embeddedness and involvement in organizational affiliation and personal networks, as well as the degree to which they were exposed to news and engagement in political conversations with others within their close ties in their organizations. Therefore, the communicative social capital, social capital (namely, religious and community) as well as civic and political engagement were very much intertwined and were influencing one another. However, more research is needed to understand to what extent communicative social capital, religious and community social capital, civic and political engagement influenced each other for the members of the Korean diaspora.

**Table 4. Table of Results**

	Findings
Korean Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural identity</li> <li>-Affiliation with Korean churches</li> <li>-Generational differences</li> <li>-Drawbacks (time- and effort-demanding)</li> <li>-Reasons to keep the community</li> <li>-Generational differences</li> </ul>
Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More social capital at the individual and small group level than societal level</li> <li>-More church social capital than community capital</li> <li>-More concerned about giving rather than receiving (due to religious beliefs)</li> <li>-Not equally distributed</li> <li>-Active in creating social capital</li> <li>-Cultural and language barriers</li> </ul>
Communicative Social Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Collective experience in politics in Korea</li> <li>-Parental role</li> </ul>
Civic Engagement	<p><i>Inhibiting factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Weak consciousness and sense of ownership</li> <li>-Church centered engagement</li> <li>-Language and cultural barriers</li> </ul> <p><i>Motivating factor</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Parental status</li> </ul>
Political Engagement	<p><i>Inhibiting factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Weak sense of ownership</li> <li>-Negative perception on politics and politicians</li> <li>-Church affiliation</li> <li>-Language and cultural barriers</li> </ul> <p><i>motivating factor</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Parental status</li> </ul>

**Contribution to the theory**

*Cultural identity of the Korean diaspora* - This dissertation enriches our understanding of the cultural identity of the Korean diaspora and contributes to the beginning of the theory building for the cultural identity of the Korean diaspora.

**Cultural identity** - Our findings have extended studies on cultural identity public relations. More specifically, Sha (2006) has discussed how ethnically diverse publics have multi-race, multi-ethnic identities; Jang and Kim's (forthcoming) study found how identities are situational. More specifically, Jang and Kim found that because members of the Korean diaspora try to be whom they need to be depending on the situation they are in rather than be who they are, their identities were found to be fluid and flexible, shifting situationally based on the needs.

Extending previous studies, this dissertation study found that while cultural identities of the Korean diaspora shift situationally, it was not always the case for the 1<sup>st</sup> generations. The study's findings suggest that 1<sup>st</sup> generations had a strong stand on their cultural identity, that is, Koreans. However, similar to previous studies, the 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations were still exploring and contesting their cultural identities and were found to shift situationally whenever it was necessary.

However, when it came to Christian identities, the generation did not matter as much, although the 1<sup>st</sup> generation showed more effort to merge Christian identities with their other identities such as their being parents, and their Christian identities did not shift situationally. Moreover, some were found to manifest their Christian identities in their daily activities in their daily interactions with others. The intersection between cultural identity and Christian identity and the interplay of these two identities in understanding different generations of the Korean diaspora offer a new lens.

**Diaspora** - This dissertation enriches our understanding of the current literature on diasporic groups. As suggested by previous research, diasporic groups can be distinguished by three unique characteristics: dispersion, homeland orientation and

boundary maintenance. In terms of the dispersion, members of the Korean diaspora were dispersed in spaces whether by force or choice (Brubaker, 2005; Safran, 1991). When many 1.5 generations spoke about themselves, they said they just “happen[ed] to be here,” as they had no choice but to immigrate with their parents. Prevalent number of the interviewees had chosen to come to America and specifically to the Washington, DC, area for new opportunities.

In terms of the second criterion, homeland orientation, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Koreans with their Korean identity held Korean values, Korean identity and loyalty to their homeland (Brubaker, 2005). While the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation did not agree with them in having strong attachment to Korean culture and Korea, many 1<sup>st</sup> generations discussed how the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations must accept their Korean heritage, as roots are important in shaping a personal identity. Due to the short immigration history, many 1<sup>st</sup> generations seemed to hold a collective memory (e.g., politics in Korea), and some had plans to return to their native land once their children finished their education or got settled. Also, several 1.5 and 1<sup>st</sup> generations were more concerned about politics in Korea rather than about American politics or Korean associations. All of these findings are in line with previous findings about the homeland orientation criterion diasporic groups hold (Safran, 1991).

However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations were not as strong in terms of the homeland orientation as the 1<sup>st</sup> or 1.5 generations. In fact, they lacked collective memory about Korea, did not have plans to return to Korea or be committed to the maintenance or restoration of Korea for its safety and prosperity (Safran, 1991). For these reasons, their values, identities and loyalty were not to Korea. However, the 1<sup>st</sup> generations argued that 2<sup>nd</sup> generations would support the Korean team during the World Cup or the Olympics as

they do not have any “bitter hatred” toward Korea. Moreover, many 1<sup>st</sup> generations seemed to assume that once Korean community has more political weight and presence, and comes to have more influence on society, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations would no longer reject their Korean heritage. Therefore, considering weakening homeland orientation for the younger generations, to what extent the 2<sup>nd</sup> or coming 3<sup>rd</sup> generations could be included in the diaspora groups need further examination.

The third criterion is boundary maintenance, which involves the preservation of a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society (Brubaker, p. 6). For the Korean diaspora, this boundary has been maintained as they have created a somewhat insular community, self-segregating themselves from the larger society (Armstrong, 1976, p. 394-5, Smith, 1986). As doing things the Korean way is more convenient and familiar, many, using the language and cultural barriers as excuses, maintained their boundary. The 2000 census reveals that Korean Americans have the third lowest level of interracial and interethnic marriage among fifteen Asian groups (U.S. Census Bureau). Moreover, paired with the role Korean churches have played in preserving the culture and values, Koreans have been rather insular. In such a way, the Korean diaspora has been different from other diasporic groups. However how the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations and the following generations will maintain the boundary is uncertain. As some 2<sup>nd</sup> generations reject their Korean identity, feel no need to create another “Korea” in America, and as their needed social capitals have not been catered to from Korean churches, as to how they will create more erosion to break or expand the boundary needs further examination. If, like churches in California, the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area chooses to begin 2<sup>nd</sup> generation

churches, the boundary could be maintained and the culture of the organizations may alter; if not, the boundary of the Korean diaspora would become blurred.

*Social capital* - The results of this dissertation study enrich our understanding of social capital of ethnically diverse publics in general and religious social capital in specific.

In terms of the use of the social capital, members of the Korean diaspora were found to use social capital situationally, utilizing and “adopting social capital based on the needs and necessity” (Jang & Kim, forthcoming, p. 30). This study extends the previous finding in understanding the intersection of social capital and cultural identity. This dissertation’s finding suggest that while social capitals were available for members, not everyone was privileged to adopt and utilize social capital as a need; rather, it was more of adopting what was available. Lack of understanding of Korean culture and values, as well as lack of the right connection, meant not being able to take advantage of the social capital available at church or the Korean community. However, to what extent members of the Korean diaspora are able to tap into other social networks to obtain social capital was unclear from the findings. Therefore, the intersection between cultural identity and social capital stemming from Korean churches and the Korean community was complicated by personal access and network, and more specifically the bridging ties.

Here, the bridging ties refer to the indirect ties, for instance: if I know persons A and B, my relationship with A and B are identified as bonding ties. However, friends of persons A and B, that is, whom I can be acquainted with connections through persons A and B, are considered bridging ties. Therefore, people whom I am directly related to, that

is, one degree apart, are considered bonding ties and people whom I could be indirectly related to, that is, two or more degrees apart, are considered bridging ties.

While the findings of the dissertation suggest opportunities to obtain social capital through bonding ties, it is unclear to what extent members of the Korean diaspora could seek social capital through bridging ties and how accessible and readily available those ties and social capital stemming from those ties would be when individuals are in need of help of resources. Also, how these bridging and bonding ties would differ within the church community and outside of the church community were unclear from the current findings.

However, the findings of this dissertation suggest that available social capital were influenced by the cultural identities and that individual ties were also important in determining to what extent one could enjoy religious and Korean community social capital, especially for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.

While previous research suggested that voluntary organizations are the primary site in which the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations find their cultural identity (Bacon, 1999; Yoo, 2000), and more specifically churches (Kim, 2011), there seems to be a gap between what the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation can obtain and what they actually need. In other words, many interviewees did not acknowledge how their cultural identities have been shaped by the Korean churches, but, rather that their concerns were lack of resources and unavailability. Sharon Kim suggests that 2<sup>nd</sup> generations are convinced that in order for them to grow spiritually, they need to be connected to a community of believers rather than trying to grow individualistically (p. 76).

Perhaps what the resources 2<sup>nd</sup> generations need are resources for Christian identity and spiritual growth rather than social capital that help them find their cultural identities. Kim further found that in cities in California, with their longer histories of Korean immigrants compared to the Washington, DC, area, are beginning to see a new phenomenon: a growing number of 2<sup>nd</sup> generation churches. Unique and different from previous Korean churches, these new churches primarily use English and use American ways of doing things for spiritual growth of their members. Moreover, they are geared toward meeting the needs of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. As to what extent cultural identity and religious social capital influences one another for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation will need further examination.

The findings of the current study support previous studies on social capital of ethnic minorities, religious involvement increasing available social capital (Choi, 2005, Hoffman & Appiah, 2005; Jang & Kim, forthcoming). Moreover, the current study's findings suggest that while there may be social capital in religious organizations, distributions were different depending on individuals' network and generation types. The findings of the current study also found partial support for previous studies on the relationship between social capital and the media use. Chen and Thorson's study (2007) found that immigrants who use more English news media tend to participate in ethnic community activities less. Similarly, those who were more familiar with the English language relied more on the media for social capital; however, how their reliance discouraged community activities was not supported.

This dissertation's findings could be a beginning toward a theory-building process. However, more studies are needed to better understand the relationship between social



capital and cultural identity and the use of social capital in everyday lives. More specifically, how factors such as Christian identity and generational differences intersect with religious social capital and the Korean community social capital need further examination to better understand the Korean diaspora, and more broadly the ethnically diverse publics, as more issues that demand understanding of ethnically diverse communities are rising (e.g., Korean community's reaction to the Virginia Tech. shooting incident of 2007).

*Civic engagement* - This dissertation enriches our understanding of civic engagement in general and civic engagement of ethnically diverse publics in specific. Unlike Putnam's concerns for the decreasing civic engagement (1978), members of the Korean diaspora have been active in civic engagement in their own terms (Verba et al., 1995). As Verba and others have argued, members of the Korean diaspora have not been active due to legal statuses; however, they were much involved through their churches (e.g., donations).

Also in line with Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad's (2008) argument, the civic engagements of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, areas were largely influenced by three factors: *place*, *type of group*, and *type of organization*. First, in terms of the place, the large size of the DC area, existence of the ethnic enclave and its easy accessibility were found to influence how Korean diaspora engaged in civic activities. Bachrach and Zautria (1985) have posited that ethnic enclaves provide opportunities for public expression of opinions on community issues. As previous studies suggest, the Korean community served as a physical and mental place for Koreans to express their concerns and apply their concerns into practice. However, how their concerns were

expressed to the larger community beyond their local churches (unless affiliated to Korean association) is unclear.

Second, the type of group, that is, the socioeconomic status, legal status, recency of migration, mix of immigrant generation, and language fluency of the Korean diaspora, all factored into the level of engagement. While, information on the socioeconomic status of the interviewees were not collected in this study, given the degrees and the current occupations of the interviewees, a majority of the interviews were in the middle class. All the factors Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad (2008) suggested influenced the civic engagement. However, to what extent which aspect influenced the civic engagement more or less needs further examination.

Third, Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad (2008) suggest that the type of organization, that is, its motivating goal or mission (e.g., religious, social), resources (funding, physical location), leadership and membership, and connection to other groups also influence the level of civic engagement (p. 23). In line with the previous finding, the current study found that religious organizations and resources from religious organizations influenced the level of civic engagement positively. A majority of the civic engagement members of the Korean diaspora took active roles in practices through or in their Korean churches. Moreover, the funding, personnel, and physical locations were provided by the religious organizations. Its mission to serve and love one another encouraged its members to be more active. However, non-religious organizations were active only to a certain extent. Due to highly negative perceptions, members of the Korean diaspora held toward non-religious organizations, organizations such as Korean associations lacked membership. Moreover, despite the presence of a large Korean community in the Washington, DC,

area, its leadership was perceived to be weak. Therefore, while religious organizations and its resources had positive influence on civic engagement of the Korean diaspora, non-religious organization and its leadership were found to have indirect negative influence on the civic engagement.

***Political engagement*** - This dissertation enriches our understanding of how the Korean diaspora makes meaning of the political engagement and contributes to the previous literature on political engagement.

Similar to civic engagement, Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad (2008) suggested place, type of group and type of organization influences the political engagement of ethnic groups. The current study found that place, Korean churches and the community at large, influences the political engagement of the Korean diaspora. However, while the Korean diaspora addresses their concerns about civic engagement through the community, the members of the Korean diaspora were found to be less active with political engagement. While the community provides the platform to express ideas and concerns, many Koreans do not seem to take political issues to their church community. The political issues were addressed in Korean associations, however, and only a few were involved in Korean associations and even though they were, as compensatory dynamic interacted with their involvement, it is unclear how transparent their political interests were in terms of their motivation.

As suggested by Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad (2008), both the *type of group* [the socioeconomic status, legal status, recency of migration, mix of immigrant generation, and language fluency of the particular group as well as the *type of organization* [its motivating goal or mission (e.g., religious, social, advocacy), resources (funding,

personnel, physical location), leadership and membership, and connection to other groups] were found to influence the level of political engagement (Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad, 2008, p. 23).

In terms of the socioeconomic status, Parenti (1967) argued that socioeconomic advancement can bring political salience, providing more resources for ethnic minorities to build civic organizations. However, despite all these factors becoming stronger, members of the Korean diaspora seemed to perceive their political presence is weak the political actions tainted with corruption. Parenti also argued that as ethnic minorities seek upward mobility, they may face more prejudice and discrimination, though they may also gain more psychological strength to make more political demands (1967). While the interviewees did not discuss prejudice and discrimination they have received from the mainstream society, their stories and experiences as well as their concerns for the next generation seem to care about strengthening political salience and making more political demands. However, many interviewees were concerned about using religious organization to promote their political presence for digressing from the church mission.

On this aspect Ecklund (2006) stated, “None of my respondents talked specifically about creating political social movements. Yet in their narratives, I find awareness of the kind of agency, injustice and identity that are the basis of coalition building (p. 133).” She further added, “Churches are not as central, however, for developing models of political involvement. Rather, Korean Americans negotiate political ideas and practices via broader institutional evangelical models of political participation (p. 139).” With this statement, Ecklund calls for a new model that

incorporates religion, political engagement and ethnicity to understand political engagement of ethnically diverse publics.

In terms of growing political presence, Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad (2008) stated that the more political demands a group makes, the more visible and influential the group becomes in the community (e.g., Vietnamese organizations in Orange County, CA). However, as many 1<sup>st</sup> generations still face language and cultural barriers as well as “shy” national character, how strong of a demand current leaders (majority are the 1<sup>st</sup> generation) are willing to make to secure influence and visibility are questionable. Perhaps, the younger generation who could bridge the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generational gaps, who are also familiar with both cultures and languages would be more equipped to address concerns across generations.

While previous studies have shown that religion has a direct influence on both the civic and political engagements of African Americans (Brown & Brown, 2003; Brown, McKenzie, & Taylor, 2003; Calhoun-Brown, 1996; Hoffman & Appiah, 2008), Arab Muslims (Jamal, 2005) the current study did not find support for positive influence religion has on political engagement. Ecklund (2006) found that “although they [Korean Americans] do not join black churches, they do adopt aspects of black church models for political participation (137).” However, how this group of Korean Americans will incorporate their political agenda to their churches and how the 1<sup>st</sup> generations will respond to their call for the merge between the Christian values and their political engagement remains unclear.

While scholars who examined political engagement of ethnic minorities have stressed place, type of organization and type of group, the mainstream scholars on

political engagement have emphasized money, time, and skills were needed to participate in political activities (e.g., contacting public officials, working in campaigns, serving on local boards) (Verba et al., 1995). The findings of this study suggest that while members of the Korean diaspora may have the money, they stressed lack of time and skills, partly because of the language and cultural barriers. Moreover, for those who do not face these barriers, that is, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, money, time and skills were not the major factors that discouraged them from political engagement.

Moreover, others have underscored the importance of being invited. Research shows that individuals are more likely to participate in political activities when they are asked to do so (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999). The findings of this study suggest that while personal invitation may encourage one to be more active, women were not exposed to similar opportunities to participate in political activities. Also, some of the invitations were blocked, with Korean politicians in America invited indirectly through religious leaders. How personal invitations would encourage individuals' political engagement was beyond the scope of this research; however, one can assume that 1<sup>st</sup> generations would be less willing given their perceived barriers.

The literature on political engagement also discusses how individual's interests and optimism, which are often reflected in political efficacy (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954). The findings of this study suggest that many members of the Korean diaspora perceived themselves to lack political efficacy, partly because of their language and cultural barriers. However, more importantly, as their perception on politics in Korea as well as politics of Koreans in America were highly negative, their political engagement is expected to be less as result of distrust toward politics even if they have political efficacy.

However, as the interviewees were from various backgrounds and experiences in terms of the socioeconomic status, legal status, recency of migration, mix of immigrant generation, language fluency, religious or non-religious organization affiliations, resources and personal connection, it is difficult to gauge at how each specific factor influenced the political engagement of the Korean diaspora. Moreover, some of these aspects were beyond the scope of the current study (e.g., political efficacy, money).

The dissertation found support for previous research findings on civic and political engagement of ethnically diverse publics. Although not all the factors are found to have a direct influence on the level of civic and political involvement (e.g., a large ethnic community will not necessarily have more resources and/or be perceived to have political presence), these factors should be considered when examining the civic and political behaviors of ethnically diverse publics.

***Communicative social capital on civic and political engagement of ethnically diverse publics*** - This dissertation enriches our understanding of the influence communicative social capital has on civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora and contributes to previous research on this area.

Rojas and others on their examination of the communicative social capital called for in-depth examination of this area of research to better understand the “exchange of information and shared meaning that flow through social ties” (p. 692). More specifically, Rojas and others emphasized the importance of examining political conversation within a network. Studies have shown that political conversations lead to increase in issue reflection (McLeod et al., 1999), political knowledge, argument quality/repertoire (Cappella et al., 2002; Kim et al., 1999) and as a result, influence civic engagement (Shah

et al., 2005; Wyatt et al., 2000). Other activities such as newspaper reading (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; McLeod et al., 1996), television news viewing (Eveland, 2001) were also found to have positive influence on civic and political activities.

The current research found that many 1<sup>st</sup> generations were engaged in printed and online newspaper reading and television news viewing for the purpose of gathering information regarding issues that concern them (e.g., legal status, Medicare). However, these activities were not found to have a positive influence on civic and political behaviors. Rather, the more information they had on politics of Koreans in America as well as politics in Korea, strengthened their distrust toward politics in general, although these activities may have led to positive influence on civic engagement as newspapers could probably have ads to help non-profit organizations.

In terms of political conversations, many, especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations and women, were not exposed to opportunities that could prompt issue reflection, political knowledge, argument quality/repertoire as suggested by previous research. Moreover, although interviews were using various communicative social capital to gather resources (e.g., cell meetings at churches, newspapers, TV, radio) as political views were biased and conversations limited, the extent to which members of the Korean diaspora would have used communicative social capital in their civic and political engagement is questionable. As many engaged in political conversations at church and as many were Republicans, issues such as gay marriage or abortions and their arguments are expected to have been biased. Therefore, communicative social capital of the Korean diaspora, while it has strong positive influence on civic engagement, may not have had such a positive influence on political engagement.



Therefore, as Rojas and others have suggested, “the interplay of institutional affiliation, personal networks, mass media use, and political talk above and beyond” (p. 695) all influences the civic and political engagement. Adding to Rojas et al.’s model of CIC, the current study’s findings suggest that ethnic group’s collective memory, here, the experiences and perception of Korean politics in Korea, as well as parents’ roles, play important roles in the function of communicative social capital of the Korean diaspora.

Therefore, in understanding communicative social capital of a particular ethnic group, one needs to examine individuals’ positions within a network (structural) in relation to individuals’ resources (e.g., political news exposure, information), as well as unique historical and cultural backgrounds as well as the generational conflicts to better understand how communicative social capital influences civic and political engagement. More specifically, one needs to understand political views of the particular group under investigation; for instance, due to religious affiliations many are Republicans, and to understand how individuals would have opportunities for political news exposure and unbiased information. However, the political views and news exposures may change in the near future as younger generations are relying on the media for news consumption and are more likely to have other networks (non-Korean Americans) who may have opposing political views who could bring unbiased and more refined argument when it comes to political issues. Nevertheless, how the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations will consume those views along with their Christian views is unclear.

As Rojas and colleagues suggest, findings at the individual level helps scholars to identify patterns that could be applied in understanding group-level phenomena. As the findings of this research at the individual level are yet preliminary, more studies are

needed to understand how the current findings could be used to understand the Korean diaspora in other cities, as well as understanding other ethnic minorities that share similarities in terms of communicative social capital, religious social capital and civic and political engagement.

### **Theoretical propositions**

Based on the results and implications of this dissertation, I propose the following theoretical statements regarding cultural identity, social capital, and civic and political engagement of the members of the Korean diaspora:

1. Cultural identity of the members of the Korean diaspora remains a struggle for the younger generation. The religious identity was found to be as strong as, if not more than, the cultural identity for some.
2. In terms of the social capital, members of the Korean diaspora found religious social capital to be plenty, especially those who have strong bonding ties and familiarity and access to the community. However, the Korean community asset was perceived to be little.
  - a. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generations were not provided with equal opportunities for sharing the social capital.
  - b. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generations sought other types of social capital from religious organizations than the ones available.
3. As for the communicative social capital, members of the Korean diaspora were found to lack resources, exposure, role models and opportunities to engage in political conversations, and gather unbiased and quality information.

- a. Members of the Korean diaspora were found to gather and seek conservative views due to their Christian views.
  - b. The collective experiences of politics in Korea, as well as the negative feelings toward apolitical Korean associations in America, discouraged motivation to actively work toward building communicative social capital.
4. In terms of the civic capital, members of the Korean diaspora, those who were affiliated with religious organizations, had sufficient civic capital, that is, social capital that encouraged them to be active in civic engagement. However, members of the Korean diaspora were found to lack political capital, that is, social capital that generated opportunities for political engagement, especially for those who were affiliated with religious organizations due to their conflicting interests.
5. Members of the Korean diaspora held differing views on civic and political engagement; they perceived civic engagement as something positive and perceived themselves to have done less than they should have, whereas their perception of political engagement was somewhat negative yet some perceived themselves to have been more active than they actually had been.
  - a. Members of the Korean diaspora were active in civic engagement in their own terms; however, more wanted to engage in civic engagement outside of the church sphere.
  - b. Members of the Korean diaspora were active in political engagement in their own terms; however, their negative perception of politics in general and negative perception on how Koreans do politics, as well as language and cultural barriers, influenced the level of involvement.

- c. Members of the Korean diaspora were encouraged to be more active in political engagement as their parental and legal status changed.

### **Direction for future research**

Based on the dissertation finding, I propose several directions for the continued research of the Korean diaspora, their social capital and civic and political engagement. Results suggest that cultural identity influences the ways in which they make meaning of the Korean community. And, religious affiliation also influences how they make meaning of the Korean community. Understanding how the members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of the Korean community without examining cultural identity and Christian identity by generations and their religious affiliation, may prevent scholars from fully understanding how the Korean diaspora makes meaning of their ethnic community in the Washington, DC, area.

Therefore, future research must understand more fully: 1) how individuals define and perceive their church community, 2) how individuals' Christian identity intersects with how they make meaning of the Korean community, and 3) what the differences are across generations and their unique status (e.g., parents, pastors). As the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations' roles in the community are expected to grow in the near future, researchers much also ask how the culture of the Korean community and religious community will reshape future members of the Korean diaspora. Additionally, future research must also address how each generation brings different avowed and ascribed identities to one another and how these the avowed identities from the non-Korean community has also influenced the ways in which the Korean diaspora made meaning of their own identities and the community. Also, future researchers could examine how and why 2<sup>nd</sup> generations have negative

feelings toward the 1<sup>st</sup> generation as well as the Korean community; more in-depth examination is needed. These aspects were beyond the scope of the current study and the interviewees' responses do not fully explain why and how aspects of the areas for future research mentioned earlier. There are currently no studies to my knowledge that have examined these aspects in depth and also from communication perspective, therefore, findings from future research could enrich our understanding of internal conflicts within the Korean diaspora and more broadly in other ethnic community where the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations are growing at a fast rate.

In terms of the social capital, based on the dissertation findings, I propose several directions for continued research of social capital and the Korean diaspora. Results suggest a plethora of religious and community social capitals available to the members of the church community as well as its unequal distribution to some members, especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. Also, the 1<sup>st</sup> generations had limited social capital due to their language and cultural barriers whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations had more access to social capital outside of the Korean community than the 1<sup>st</sup> generation.

Examining the current findings, future research needs to more fully examine: 1) what social capital the younger generations are seeking for from the church and Korean community so that the chasm between what they need and what they have could be smaller, 2) how the members of the Korean diaspora makes meaning of the communicative social capital more in depth, and 3) how the members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of the other social capital outside of the church and Korean communities. Unlike the 1<sup>st</sup> generations, the younger generations were less concerned about having common backgrounds (e.g., school ties or regional ties) but lived similar

experiences in America. Additional research is needed to understand how bonding and bridging ties differently influence how members of the Korean diaspora make meaning of their social networks.

Research must also examine how each generation creates their unique social network; as the Korean culture and norms are becoming weaker, the ties and structure of the network are expected to change significantly as the younger generations adopt American ways of doing things. Such a phenomenon implies different ways in which social capital is defined and used for the Korean religious community and Korean community at large. Therefore, researchers need to examine these aspects to better understand the Korean diaspora specifically and more broadly other ethnic groups that share similar networking structure and social capital (e.g., powerful religious social capital).

In terms of the civic and political engagement, based on the dissertation findings, I propose several directions for continued research of civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora. Results suggest religious community encourages and provides many opportunities for civic engagement; however, due to religious interest, unlike previous findings, the current study found no positive influence on political engagement. Also, the current study found factors such as language and cultural barriers, legal status, negative perception on politics and lack of role models to have inhibited them from taking active roles in civic and political engagement, whereas, their personal status such as parents have encouraged political engagement. However, more in-depth examinations are needed to fully understand the: 1) influence of religious beliefs on civic and political engagement

at the individual level, and 2) how their communicative social capital directly and indirectly influences civic and political engagement.

In addition, more research is needed to systematically examine how their demographics (e.g., age, gender, educational level, SES, and native language) influence civic and political engagement individually. As there are too many factors, future research could employ quantitative research methods to examine how each factor influences civic and political engagement to what extent.

Furthermore, future research could also examine how the members of the Korean diaspora could collaborate to strengthen communicative social capital of the community so that more members of the community could become active in civic and political engagement. Moreover, as the current study found perception of a weak and divided community, future studies could also examine ways for the community could build stronger social capital that would contribute to unifying and empowering the community. Also, there is need for more research to better understand the miscommunications between the generations and also the miscommunication between religious organizations and Korean associations to minimize internal conflicts within the community. Also, more research could examine the current religious community in communities that have longer histories than the Washington, DC, area (e.g., New York, California) to gain insights on the future of the Korean community in the Washington, DC area. Last, future research is needed to develop a new model that would incorporate Korean diasporas' differing cultural and Christian identities and their unique political agendas in the next-generation churches.

This dissertation serves as a catalyst for future research regarding the social capital and civic and political engagement of the ethnically diverse publics. Whereas this dissertation highlighted the intersections of the Korean diaspora, ethnic community, social capital, and civic and political engagement, future research needs to examine how other intersections come into play.

Moreover, this dissertation was delimited to the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area to illustrate the rich and diverse experiences of those who reside in this area. Members of the Korean diaspora in rural areas (e.g., small or no Korean community) or areas with longer immigrant history (e.g., Hawaii, New York) would have different experiences. Also, the current study did not examine how socioeconomic status would intersect with the civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area. Furthermore, the study did not examine other ethnically diverse publics who may have many similarities with that of the Korean diaspora. Adding these components to the future research would enrich our understanding of the ethnically diverse publics.

### **Limitations**

This study is not without limitations. Because 60-70% of Koreans are affiliated to local churches, it was difficult to recruit individuals who were not affiliated to churches. As indicated, as church-affiliated Koreans have relatively homogeneous networks due to their time spent at their church (and not having more time and resources to tap into other networks) my interviewees were not able to introduce me to individuals who were not affiliated to churches. Also, due to lack of funding and limited data collection timeline, it was difficult to find contacts as diverse as I had intended.



Specifically, my sample was skewed toward middle class Republican, 1.5 and 1<sup>st</sup> generations who attended church. In particular, it is possible that a sample from non-middle class, Democratic, 2<sup>nd</sup> generations who do not attend church may have produced richer or contrasting statements. However, in order to overcome this limitation, I conducted a telephone interviews and email correspondence to gather diverse interviewees. Also, I conducted most of the interviews as preferred by the interviewees; therefore, I made frequent visits to Virginia to reduce their time and energy in participating in this study. I also accommodated the interviewees using the language they preferred.

The dissertation's area under examination also presented constraints and limitations on the research. As the topic of this study covered vast areas of the lives of the Korean diaspora, each interview took longer than I had anticipated. The longest interview was about two hours and a half, which made both the interviewee and I uncomfortable. Also, as interviews took longer than expected, I had to skip a couple smaller questions so that the interviewees would have enough time to elaborate on major questions. Given more time and resources (e.g., compensating the interviewee for their time and insights) the interviews could have been richer.

Personal biases also presented another limitation. As a 1.5 generation who has many experiences in the Korean community and religious community, my personal experiences may have influenced the manner in which I interviewed the interviewees, and coded, analyzed and presented my research findings. To overcome this limitation, I grounded my research questions, interview protocol and data analysis in the cultural identity, social capital and civic and political engagement literatures.

## **Conclusion**

This exploratory dissertation sought to examine how members of the Korean diaspora in the Washington, DC, area makes meaning of the Korean community, social capital and civic and political engagement. Interest and research on these areas of the Korean diaspora have been scarce, and hence incomprehensive. While the interest on social capital of ethnic minorities are growing, given the exponential growth in the size of the population, more research is needed to understand the intersection of ethnic community, social capital, and civic and political engagement.

Results contribute to our understanding of previous literature on cultural identity, social capital and civic and political engagement of ethnically diverse publics. This study was one of only a few that examined civic and political engagement of the Korean diaspora using qualitative research methods. And, it is the first study that examined the influence of communicative social capital in Korean civic and political engagement. The findings suggest that cultural identity inherently influences the members of the Korean diaspora in the meaning of making of social capital, civic and political engagement. Empowerment of the community and the members of the ethnically diverse public rest on many aspects, but especially on strengthening sense of ownership, education, and making civic and political engagement more easily accessible (e.g., language and process) for the members of the Korean diaspora. Also, counseling and communication across generations and between religious organizations and Korean associations were also found to serve a great purpose for the active civic and political engagement across generations and groups.

There is still much to learn and much more to examine about ethnically diverse publics in America. Ultimately, it is my hope that this dissertation revealed previously under-examined areas about the Korean diaspora. In this increasingly diversifying society, only by understanding their struggles and experiences can we better understand the ways in which ethnically diverse publics make meaning of becoming Americans.

## Appendixes

### Appendix A—Interview Invitation Script

(via phone call, email, or in-person)

Hello. My name is Ahnlee Jang. I am a graduate student in the Communication Department at the University of Maryland. As part of my graduate program, I am conducting confidential interviews with Koreans living in the United States to discuss their perceptions and activities in civic and political engagement. I received your contact information from [*If from another participant, state “from another individual in your community who has participated in this research. If from Korean business directory, state “from Korean business directory.”*]

Your participation in the interviews is important to help understand the civic and political engagement of Koreans living in the United States. If you are interested in participating, the interview will be conducted in person and will last approximately 1 ½ hours. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and all information you give me will be kept confidential. Would you be interested in participating?

[*If no...*] Thank you for your consideration. If you should decide later you would like to participate, you may reach me at 301-741-0188 or my email at [ajang@umd.edu](mailto:ajang@umd.edu). Thank you again.

[*If yes...*] I will be visiting your area the week of XXXX. Would you be available at any point during this week to meet for an interview? If so, what time is most convenient for you? What location would be most convenient for you? I could come to your home or we could meet somewhere in the community that would be convenient to you, such as [*name community centers or other locations that would be convenient to participants and offer privacy for the interview*].

When we meet, I will provide you with a form stating the details of the interview and the research report and whom you can contact with any questions. I will also ask that you sign a form granting me permission to audiotape our interview for note-taking purposes.

I would like to send you a confirmation for our interview. Could you please tell me your email address and/or mailing address to send you a confirmation?

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research. If you should have any questions or concerns prior to our interview, you may reach me via phone at 301-741-0188 or via email at [ajang@umd.edu](mailto:ajang@umd.edu).

Thank you.

[*If he/she expresses any concern over confidentiality, I can explain to him/her that he/she can even provide me with a pseudonym. I will explain my process of storing, destroying, and reporting data, if I feel he/she is pressured by the issues of*

*confidentiality. I will also let him/her know that participating in the interview could be stopped at any point if he/she feels uncomfortable.]*

## Appendix B—Interview Protocol

Hi, my name is Ahnlee Jang, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Maryland conducting research for my dissertation on the civic and political engagement of Koreans living in the United States. I'd like to thank you for participating in this research. Your participation will be highly valuable for my research and further academic study of public relations and of Korean diaspora but the findings of the study could also contribute to minimizing possible misunderstandings the mainstream society has on Koreans' civic and political engagement.

This interview will be about 1 ½ hours, and, with your permission, I'd like to record this interview so I can accurately represent your responses. Your responses and your identity will be kept confidential. Anything you say will be kept anonymous and will not be linked to you or to your family.

In this interview, we will discuss your role in Korean communities in the United States, and your perception and activities in terms of civic and political engagement.

*(Repeat these points as necessary if individuals have questions about the consent forms they have signed)*

- There are no right or wrong answers. I only want to know your thoughts and opinions, and every opinion is valuable.
- Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You may choose to skip a question or stop the interview at any time and for any reason with no penalty, especially if you feel uncomfortable with the question or subject. Your information will stay secure. I will not share your personal information, including your name, with anyone other else. Your name will not be linked to the information that you provide during the interview.
- This interview is being tape-recorded in case I need to listen to it later to clarify something from the notes. This tape recording will not be shared with others and will be destroyed at the end of this research.
- The interview will take no more than an hour and a half.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

### **First, I'd like to know more about you, could you**

1. Please describe your background.
  - a. When did you come to the United States?
  - b. Why did you [or your family] decide to come to the States?
2. How do you identify yourself culturally?
  - a. What cultural group do you think you belong to? [what group do you feel most comfortable in?]
  - b. What cultural group do you think others place you in?
  - c. How do you think your cultural identity has changed over the years since you've been in the States?

### **RQ1: How does Korean Diaspora make meaning of the ethnic community?**

**Now I'd like to ask you questions about the Korean community you belong to and resources available to you in Korean communities.**

3. When you hear the term community, what do you think of? What is your idea of a community?
  - a. What types of help of information do you expect to receive from a community?
  - b. What services should a community provide?
  - c. What type of environment should a community facilitate?
4. What community do you belong to?
  - a. Can you describe or explain your thoughts on Korean community [or the community you belong to]?
5. What do you think is the “culture” of the Korean community?
  - a. What are the general norms?
  - b. What are the general characteristics?

**RQ2a: How does (Korean) community create opportunities for social capital?**

**RQ2b: How does Korean Diaspora make meaning of social capital?**

6. What are some of the resources that you receive/give in the community that you belong to?
  - a. What else?
  - b. Are there any resources you need but cannot receive from the community you belong to?
  - c. Where do you go to have access to these resources?

[If the participants cannot come up with any, provide the following list: information about education, finance, business, retirement and religion]
7. How have you been involved in the larger community?
  - a. What are some of the services/activities you have been involved in?
  - b. What are some of the responsibilities that you think you have in this society?
  - c. How did you come to recognize these responsibilities?

**RQ3a: How does Korean Diaspora in the United States make meaning of civic engagement?**

**RQ3b: How does Korean diaspora in the United States make meaning of political engagement?**

8. How would you define civic engagement?
  - a. What comes to your mind when you think of civic engagement in general?
  - b. How would you describe how Americans in general engage in civic activities?
  - c. What do you think are civic engagement Americans in general engage in?
9. How would you define political engagement?

- a. What comes to your mind when you think of political engagement in general?
- b. How would you describe how Americans in general engage in political activities?
- c. What do you think are political engagement Americans in general engage in?

**Thank you for answering all the questions, now I'd like to ask you about how you perceive civic and political engagement in the United States. Please explain as much as you know, if you don't know much just tell me that you don't know.**

**RQ4: How does the Korean diaspora make meaning of the relationship between social capital and civic and political engagement of Koreans in the society of in the United States?**

10. How is your civic engagement?

- a. What are some of the duties you have been doing?
- b. What would you do differently if you are a citizen? [if the participant is a citizen]
- c. What would you do differently if you have children? [if the participant is a parent]

11. How is your political engagement?

- a. How have you been active politically in the States?
- b. Can you be more specific? What else?
- c. How have you been active politically in Korea? [if the participant came to the States recently or if the participant seem to be well aware of political situations in Korea]

12. What do you think about the way Koreans in the United States have been active in political sphere?

- a. What do you think of the way Koreans have been serving the community?
- b. How do you think Koreans living in the States have been serving the country?
- c. How do you think about the way Koreans have recognized/practiced civic duties?

13. How do you think Koreans in general perceive civic engagement in the United States?

- a. What do you think about their involvement in civic engagement?
- b. Why do you think that?
- c. What factors do you think encourages or motivates civic engagement for Koreans?
- d. What barriers do you think Koreans face when it comes to civic engagement?

14. How do you think Koreans in general perceive political engagement in the United States?

- a. What do you think about their involvement in political engagement? [voting, political campaigns, becoming a politician themselves]
- b. Why do you think that?



c. What factors do you think encourages or motivates political engagement for Koreans?

d. What barriers do you think Koreans face when it comes to political engagement?

**Thank you so much for your participation today. Your insights will be very valuable for my dissertation.**

**Is there anything that we haven't discussed that you think would be important to discuss? Or anything that we left out but that you would like to discuss?**

**Should any additional insights come to mind, please feel free to contact me. If I have any further questions, may I contact you again?**

**Thanks again.**

## Appendix C—IRB Application and Consent Form

<b>Principal Investigator/ Project Faculty Advisor</b> <i>(NOT a student or fellow)</i>	Dr. Elizabeth Toth	<b>Email Address</b>	eltoth@umd.edu
		<b>Telephone Number</b>	301-405-8077

<b>Student Investigator</b>	Ahnlee Jang	<b>Email Address</b>	ajang@umd.edu
		<b>Telephone Number</b>	301-741-0188

<b>Project Title</b>	Social capital of Korean Diaspora
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<b>Department/ Unit Administering the Project</b>	Communication Department
<b>Where to send Approval Documents</b>	Dr. Elizabeth Toth 2130 Skinner Building University of Maryland
<b>Check if this is</b>	Student master's thesis <input type="checkbox"/> OR Dissertation research project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>Funding Agency(s)</b>	N/A
<b>ORAA Proposal ID Number</b>	N/A

**Target Population:** The study population will include (Check all that apply): N/A

- |  |                                    |   |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> pregnant women  | <input type="checkbox"/> neonates  | <input type="checkbox"/> individuals with mental disabilities   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> minors/children | <input type="checkbox"/> prisoners | <input type="checkbox"/> individuals with physical disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> human fetuses   | <input type="checkbox"/> students  |   |

**Exempt (Optional):** You may suggest this protocol meets the requirements for Exempt Review by checking the box below and listing the Exempt category(s) that may apply. Please refer to the Exempt Category document for additional information.

**Exemption Category(s):**  
**Rationale:**

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**Date**                      **Signature of Principal Investigator [REQUIRED]**

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**Date**                      **Signature of Co-Principal Investigator**

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**Date**                      **Signature of Student Investigator**

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**Date**                      **Signature of IRB Liaison/Department Chair [REQUIRED]**

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Please print name of IRB Liaison/Department Chair)*

## Social Capital of Korean Diaspora

### 1. Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to explore how Korean community create social capital and how social capital influence civic and political engagement of Korean Diaspora in the United States. This study will specifically explore in greater depth how Koreans living in the United States make meaning of civic and political engagement and how social capital available to them influences these activities. Exploring these questions can contribute to larger theory of social capital and how social capital function differently in differing ethnic groups. Also, the findings of the study can contribute to the body of literature on civic and political engagement of ethnically diverse groups.

Up to 75 in-depth interviews with Korean Diaspora will be conducted to explore how Koreans make meaning of social capital, and civic and political engagement. No deception will be involved and all participants interviewed will be at least 18 years of age. Interviews will be in person and will be audio-tape recorded. All participants will have the option to decline being audio-tape recorded; participants who decline audio taping will still be included in the study. All participants will be self-identified Korean descents currently residing in the United States, and will be recruited through convenient and purposive means. Standard methods to protect privacy

### 2. Subject Selection:

a. Participants will be Korean descents residing in the U.S. who will be founded in Korean business directory of the Greater Washington DC area and by other individuals in the study through snowball sampling. Most participants will reside in Maryland, Washington DC and Northern Virginia. Other participants may include residents of California and New York as politically active Korean descents are likely to live in these areas. Interviewing these individuals will depend on accessibility. Individuals will be phoned or emailed and asked if they are willing to participate in the study (see attached script as a supporting document). The nature of the project and their potential participation will be explained. If participants are willing, a time and place convenient to them will be set up, where an informed consent form will be signed by them before the

b. All participants will be over the age of 18. Participants will be those who identify themselves as a Korean descent.

c. Diverse participants are desired, as in maximum variation sampling, to ensure that a variety of voices are heard through the research. However, because this is a convenience, snowball sampling method, participants will not be specifically recruited for characteristics beyond their ethnicity. "Korean descents" will include those who immigrated to the United States, those who were born in America, as well as temporary residents of the United States. Korean Diaspora are desired for the research because little is known about how social capital available to them

d. influence civic and political engagement

A maximum of 50 participants will be interviewed.

**3. Procedures:**

Participants will be interviewed for approximately 1 ½ hours on one occasion. Before the interview begins, participants will be informed of the study and read the informed consent form. Participants will be informed of the interviewer's wish to audiotape the interviews for purposes of accuracy and note-taking; however, participants will have the right to decline being taped. After participants sign the consent form, the interview will begin. A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix) of open-ended questions will be used by the student researcher, who will conduct interviews in person. While the interviews will have some formal questions regarding specific theoretical concepts, much of the questioning will depend on the actual interview candidates. After stating the area of discussion, the interviewees will be encouraged to continue speaking on areas of interest or

**4. Risks:**

This study presents limited risks to participants. Interviews will be audio-taped, which may threaten the anonymity of participants; however, in all interviews, the identities of participants will remain confidential and audio files will be stored in a secure location. Additionally, participants may feel uncomfortable discussing their civic and political engagement they have been involved in in the past. Participants will be told that their participation is voluntary and that they can decline to answer specific questions or to end their participation at any time without penalty.

**5. Benefits:**

Participants will not receive any direct benefits for participating in this research. However, the findings of the study could contribute to in-depth understanding of Korean diaspora and their civic and political engagement.

**6. Confidentiality:**

Standard methods to protect privacy will be maintained at all times. The identities of participants will remain confidential. Signed consent forms will be stored separately from data so participants' identities cannot be tied back to responses. Only the Principal Investigator and the Student Investigator will have access to the names of participants. Pseudonyms will be used for participants, and data, including the audio recordings and digital transcripts, will be securely stored in the Principle Investigator's locked office in a password protected file on her office computer and home computer. Hard copies of data, such as the consent forms, will remain in the Principal Investigator's file cabinet in the locked office. All data will be destroyed (i.e., shredded or erased) when use is no longer needed but not before a minimum of five years after collection.

**7. Consent Process:**

Potential participants will be provided a brief summary of the research requesting their participation and informed consent forms (see Appendix). There is no deception in the information, which will be presented in plain language. Standard UMD consent forms will be used—the informed consent form will contain information about the study, the investigators, participants' rights, and contact information for the Principal and Student Investigators. Participants will be informed that participation is voluntary. All participants will receive a copy of the consent form for their records.

**8. Conflict of Interest:**

There is no conflict of interest.

**9. HIPAA Compliance:**

Not applicable.

**10. Research Outside of the United States:**

Not applicable.

**11. Research Involving Prisoners:**

Not applicable.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

Each copy of the application must include the IRB application cover sheet, the information required in items 1-11 above, and all relevant supporting documents including: consent forms, letters sent to recruit participants, questionnaires completed by participants, and any other material that will be presented, viewed or read to human subject participants.

For funded research, a copy of the Awarded Grant Application (minus the budgetary information) must be included. If the Grant has not been awarded at the time of submission of this Initial Application, a statement must be added to the Abstract Section stating that an Addendum will be submitted to include the Grant Application once it has been awarded.

**NUMBER OF COPIES**

Please send 1 original application including the signed cover sheet to:

**IRB Office  
0101 Lee Building  
College Park, MD 20742-5125**

<b>Project Title</b>	<i>Social capital of Korean Diaspora</i>
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	<i>This research is being conducted by Dr. Elizabeth Toth, Principal Investigator, and Student Investigator, Ahnlee Jang, a PhD student at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are at least 18 years of age and are a member of Korean Diaspora. The purpose of this research project is to explore how Koreans identify and use social capital in civic and political engagement in the United States. This research may be used to better understand Korean Diaspora in the United States.</i>
<b>Procedures</b>	<i>The interview involves a face-to-face conversation that will be audio recorded. The time of the interview will vary depending on the answers, but will be about one and a half hours long. Questions will focus on topics such as your community, how you view civic and political engagement and how you have been involved in your community. By participating in this research, you will contribute much to the body of knowledge on Korean Diaspora.</i>
<b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b>	<i>There may be some risks from participating in this research study, such as feeling uncomfortable answering questions about your civic and political engagement. If at any time in the interview you feel uncomfortable, you may opt not to answer the questions or discontinue the interview. Also, there is a potential for the loss/breach of confidentiality should the data somehow become compromised, although data will be protected to the full extent possible.</i>
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	<i>We hope that, in the future, other scholars might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the Korean Diaspora in the United States and their civic and political engagement.</i>
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<i>We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, your identity will not be revealed in this research. Through the use of an identification key, only the researchers will be able to link your identity to your data, and only the researchers will have access to the identification key. If a report or article is written about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.  <i>This research project involves making audiotapes of the interview that will be made solely for the purposes of transcription. <del>Only</del> the interviewers will have access to these</i></i>

	<p>tapes and they will be destroyed after information has been gathered and within the next five years.</p> <p>___ I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.</p> <p>___ I do not agree to be audiotaped during participation in this study.</p>	
<p><b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b></p>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you have questions, concerns, or complaints related to the research, please contact the investigators: Dr. Elizabeth Toth at 301-405-8077, eltoth@umd.edu, or Ahnlee Jang at 301-741-0188, ajang@umd.edu. Either investigator can also be reached at the address: 2130 Skinner Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20724.</p>	
<p><b>Participant Rights</b></p>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 0101 Lee Building College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: <a href="mailto:irb@umd.edu">irb@umd.edu</a> Telephone: 301-405-0678</b></p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>	
<p><b>Statement of Consent</b></p>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
<p><b>Signature and Date</b></p>	<p><b>NAME OF SUBJECT [Please Print]</b></p>	
	<p><b>SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT</b></p>	
	<p><b>DATE</b></p>	

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