



# The rise of Korean communities in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century American South

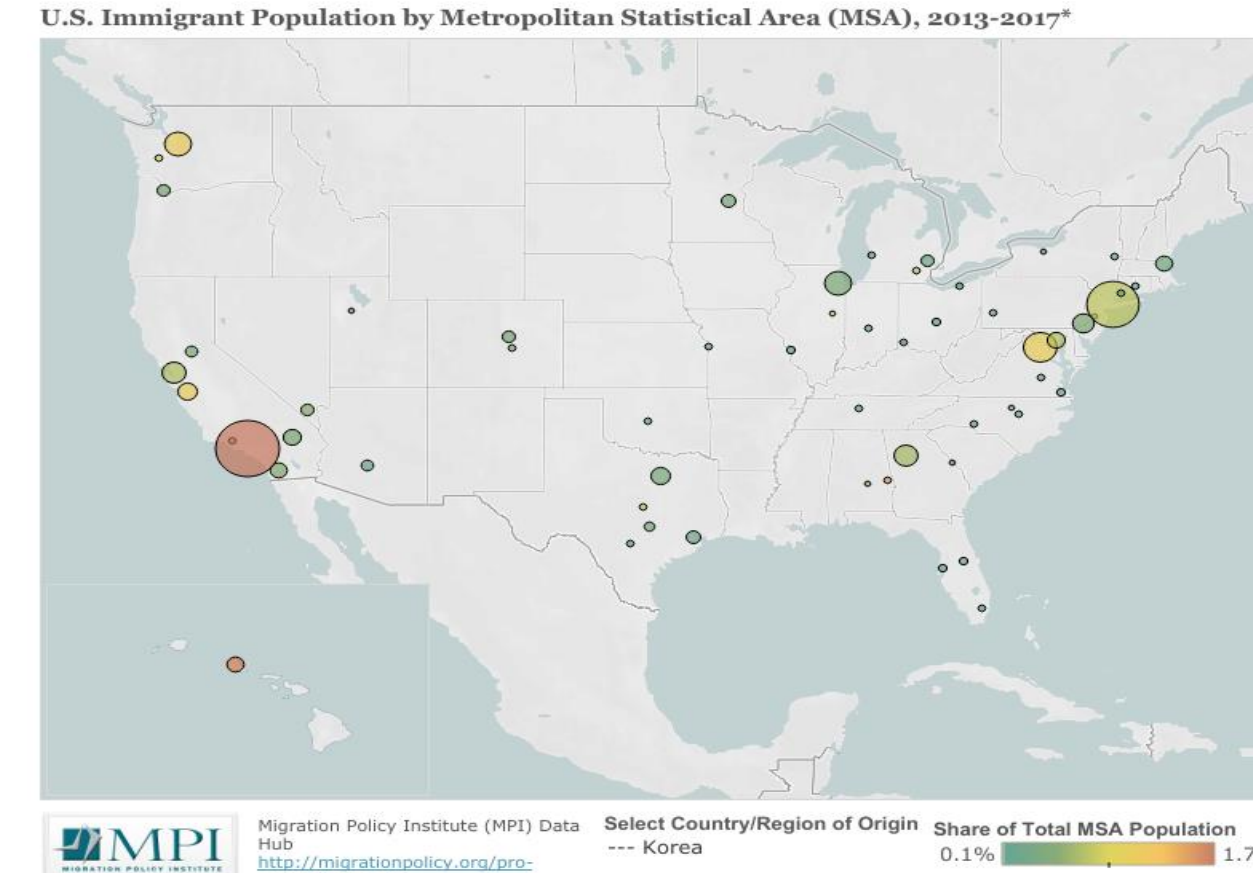
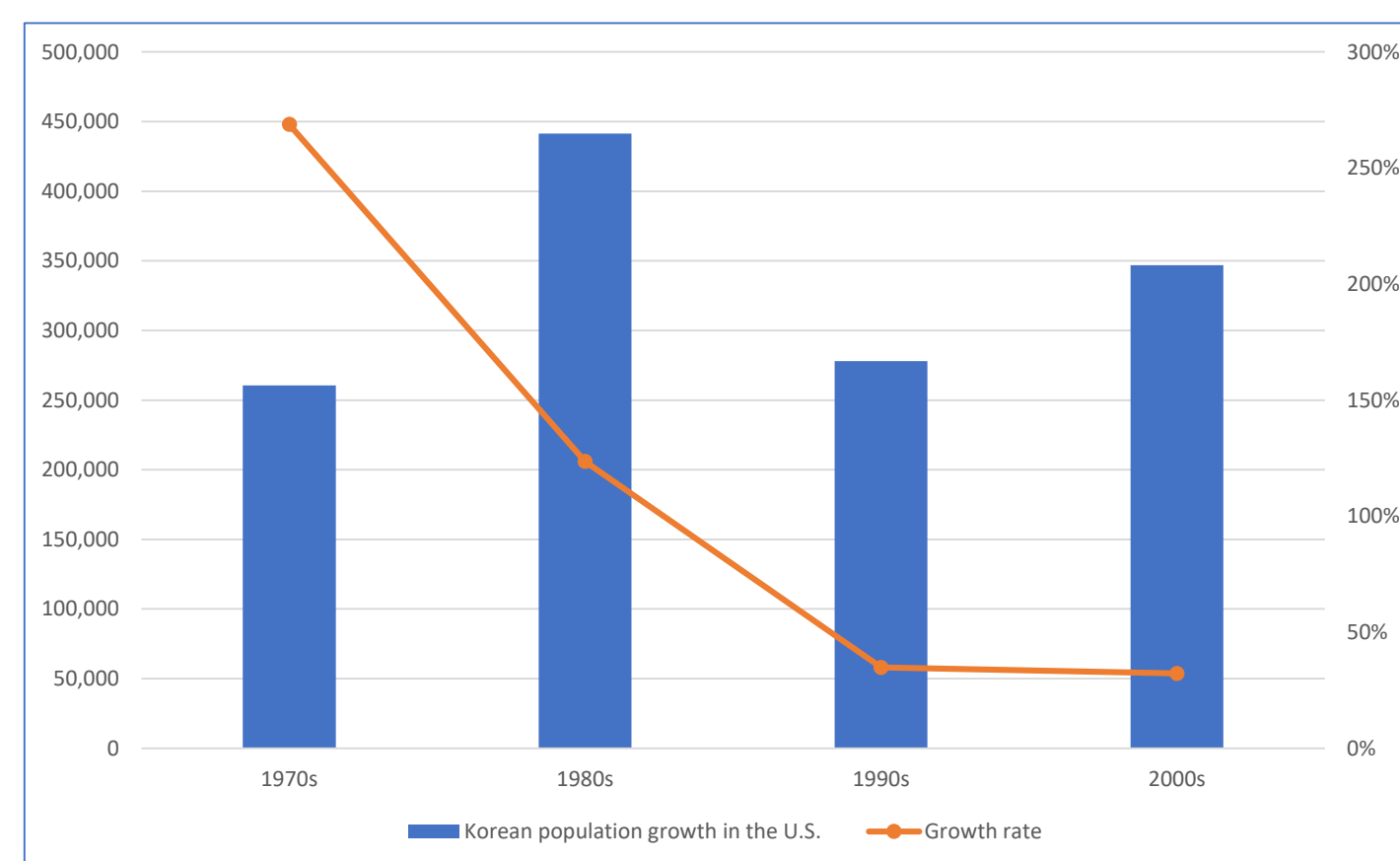
Jaeho Ko, PhD Candidate, PhD in Geography, UNC Charlotte



## Introduction

- The South is leading the trend of emerging immigrant gateway cities (Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2009).
- The scholarship is heavily focused on Latino immigrants while Asian immigrants, another key 21st-century gateway group, have received comparatively little attention.
- Most of the new gateway studies in the South remain at the discovery of new ethnic communities based on single case studies.
- Only few studies have attempted to analyze the emergence of contemporary ethnic communities in the South in a comprehensive manner (Winders 2005), and none explored the Korean experience.

## Korean community in the U.S.



## Research question

What variables of American metropolitan areas are leading the contemporary rise of Korean community in them?

## Data

### Korean population (Decennial census 1970 – 2010)

- 1970 was the first time that Korean was included in the ethnic category that a person could choose in the census.
- Single Korean category is chosen for consistency of the study subject since multi-racial category is available from the 2000 census.
- The margin of error in ACS is too large to identify small groups such as single ethnic group at MSA level.

### Unit of Analysis: Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

- The proportion of Koreans living in the MSA accounts for more than 95% of the total Korean population in the United States since 1980.
- I used the 2010 boundary which is the latest version that Korean population data from the decennial census is applicable.
- To keep the study area consistent for all decades, the historic data are converted into 2010 MSA boundary.

## Methods

### Systematic Classification

- Criterion: If the increase in Koreans from 1990 to 2010 accounted for more than half of the Korean population in 2010, the MSA was classified as 'emerging Korean community' or 'established Korean community' if not.
- The regional divisions follow the criteria of the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Of the total 381 MSAs, 254 MSAs are selected as samples except 127 cases in which some variables are missing.

	Established	Emerging	Total
Midwest	46 (Chicago, ...)	6 (Springfield, MO, ...)	52
Northeast	28 (NYC, ...)	5 (Boston, ...)	33
South	50 (Houston, ...)	54 (Atlanta, ...)	104
West	43 (LA, ...)	22 (Phoenix, ...)	65
Total	167	87	254

### Binomial Logistic Regression

Average of selected socioeconomic characteristics for MSA type

Variable	Established	Emerging
Total population, 2010	1,024,895	852,310
Korean population, 2010	6,304	3,655
Growth of total population, 1970-2010	71.47%	174.61%
Foreign-born, 2010	9.86%	10.18%
Median household income, 2010	\$53,031	\$49,787
Unemployment, 2010 <sup>a</sup>	7.88%	7.87%
Median housing value, 2010	\$195,844	\$182,131
Bachelor's degree or higher, 2010 <sup>b</sup>	28.66%	28.95%

- a Includes individuals aged 16 and higher in the labor force.
- b Includes individuals aged 25 and higher.
- Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey 2008-2012 estimates

## Results

	Coef.	Std. Err.	Odds ratio
Percent growth of population, 1970-2010	0.011***	0.002	1.011
Percent foreign-born, 2010	-0.018	0.030	0.982
Median household income, 2010 (in \$1,000)	-0.062**	0.031	0.939
Percent unemployment, 2010	0.010	0.116	1.010
Median housing value, 2010 (in \$1,000)	0.001	0.004	1.001
Percent bachelor's degree or higher, 2010	0.082***	0.027	1.085
US Region			
Northeast	0.857	0.720	2.357
South	1.859***	0.582	6.419
West	0.610	0.769	1.841
Constant	-2.217	1.986	0.190
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.258	
N		254	

- The dependent variables are coded as follows:
  - MSA with established Korean community = 0
  - MSA with emerging Korean community = 1.
- The omitted category for the U.S. region is Midwest.
- \* $p \leq 0.1$ . \*\* $p \leq 0.05$ . \*\*\* $p \leq 0.01$ .

## Conclusion

- The southern MSAs have become the central axis of emerging Korean communities.
- The growth of the MSA, the size of the immigrants, and various economic conditions cannot explain the contemporary growth of the Korean community.
- The cluster of highly educated people is a powerful source that attracts Koreans.

## References

- Singer, Audrey, Susan W. Hardwick, and Caroline B. Brettell. 2009. *Twenty-First Century Gateways: Immigrant Incorporation in Suburban America*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Winders, Jamie. 2005. "Changing Politics of Race and Region: Latino Migration to the US South." *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (6): 683–699.