Ethnic and sub-ethnic attachments among Chinese, Korean, and Indian immigrants in New York City

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Abstract

This article compares ethnic and sub-ethnic attachments in Chinese, Indian, and Korean immigrants in New York City, based on results of a survey. Indian respondents, with much higher levels of education and fluency in English, show a lower level of cultural ethnic attachment than the other two groups. The Chinese show the lowest level of formal ethnic affiliation, mainly due to their much lower level of religious affiliation. All three groups show extremely high levels of informal ethnic networks. However, Chinese and Indian respondents largely limit their close friendships to their sub-ethnic group, based on national origin, religion, regional origin and/or language, while Korean respondents, characterized by group homogeneity, tend to maintain close friendships with all other Koreans. Much larger proportions of Chinese and Indian respondents than Koreans choose the sub-ethnic identity label and they show much lower levels of loyalty to their homeland than Korean respondents.

Keywords: Asian Americans; Chinese Americans; ethnic solidarity; India; ethnic identity; Korea.

Ethnic attachment indicates the degree to which members of an ethnic group are culturally, socially, and/or psychologically attached to the group (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Gordon 1964; Hurh and Kim 1984; Yinger 1980). Although national origin, language, religion and race are components of ethnicity, researchers have usually considered national origin as the basis for ethnic groups, mainly because the ‘homeland’ is very important for ethnicity, and partly because the US Census Bureau has tended to treat national-origin groups as ethnic groups. But some national-origin groups, such as Iranian and Asian
Indian immigrants are divided into a few or several sub-groups based on language, religion, and/or regional origin. Researchers have treated these sub-groups of a national-origin group as sub-ethnic groups. Members of these ethnic groups with sub-ethnic divisions may be characterized by sub-ethnic attachment rather than by all-encompassing ethnic attachment. They may be strongly attached to a particular sub-ethnic group while weakly tied to the broad ethnic group. It is therefore important to examine the level of sub-ethnic attachment as well as the level of ethnic attachment for these ethnic groups with internal divisions.

To assess an immigrant/ethnic group’s level of ethnic attachment more objectively, we need to compare the group with other groups with a similar immigration history. But almost all previous studies of ethnic attachment focus on single groups (Bonacich and Modell 1980; Reitz 1980; Hurh and Kim 1984; Fugita and O’Brien 1991; Min 1991; Light et al. 1993; Bozorgmehr 1997). To fill the gap in research on ethnic attachment, this study compares Chinese, Korean, and Indian immigrants in New York City in their patterns of ethnic and sub-ethnic attachments. These three Asian groups are large enough to maintain strong ethnic attachment. According to the 2006 American Community Survey by the US Census Bureau, there were 593,604 single-race Chinese Americans, 545,133 Indian Americans, and 195,395 Korean Americans in the New York–New Jersey CMSA area.

Although the Chinese community in the city has existed for more than a hundred years, a predominant majority of Chinese Americans there consist of post-1965 immigrants and their children. Korean and Indian communities in the city are largely the byproducts of the 1965 Immigration Act. The 2000 US Census shows that 85 per cent of Chinese/Taiwanese, 87 per cent of Korean, and 89 per cent of Indian immigrants aged 25–64 years immigrated in 1976 and after. Thus the three Asian immigrant groups offer an ideal case for a comparative study of ethnic attachment.

Factors contributing to ethnic and sub-ethnic attachments

The following three factors can be considered the major contributing factors that help us understand the differences in ethnic and sub-ethnic attachments among Korean, Chinese, and Indian immigrant groups: (1) the degree of group homogeneity; (2) religious affiliations and practices; (3) educational and English fluency levels. Based on the literature review and the 2000 US Census, this section discusses how Chinese, Indian, and Korean immigrants differ in each of these three causal factors.
Level of group homogeneity or diversity

Survey studies conducted in Los Angeles reveal that Iranian immigrants consist of four ethno-religious sub-groups: Muslims as the dominant group in Iran, and Jews, Armenians and Bahais as three minority groups (Light et al. 1993; Bozorgmehr 1997). They show that each sub-group maintains its own sub-ethnic networks, identity, and economy. Members of an ethnic group that consists of a few or several sub-ethnic groups may show a high level of sub-ethnic attachment based on pre-migrant sub-ethnic ties. Yet they may have difficulty in maintaining all-encompassing ethnic cohesion or solidarity because of the sub-group divisions. The differential degrees of group homogeneity or diversity are important for understanding differences in patterns of sub-ethnic attachment among the three Asian immigrant groups. While Indians and Chinese have high levels of sub-ethnic divisions, Korean immigrants are highly homogeneous. Indian immigrants are divided by great sub-ethnic differences based on religion, place of origin, and language. Indian immigrants include large numbers of Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians, although Hindus comprise a majority of the Indian immigrant population (Williams 1988; Khandelwal 2002). They are also divided into several different regional-linguistic sub-groups. There are several different varieties of Hinduism depending upon the regional-linguistic origin. While Indian Muslim and Sikh immigrants usually use their religion for personal identity, Hindu immigrants tend to use their regional-linguistic category for identity (Williams 1988). Hindus in India have a history of conflicts with Muslims, Sikhs and Christians.

The Chinese immigrant population is also characterized by great internal diversity, based on national origin, region, and language. Chinese immigrants originated from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and other southeast Asian countries, as well as from mainland China (Zhou 2001, p. 149). They differ significantly in their language and culture, political ideology, and socioeconomic background (Kwong 1987, 1997; Yang 1999). A vast majority of Taiwanese immigrants completed a college education, while a significant proportion of documented and undocumented immigrants from mainland China did not complete high school (Min 2006, p. 82). While nearly half of Taiwanese immigrants have professional and managerial occupations, a large proportion of mainland Chinese residents face a severe language barrier and are engaged in low-paying jobs available in Chinese-owned businesses (Waldinger and Tseng 1992; Kwong 1997). Thus the sub-ethnic divisions among Chinese immigrants overlap with the class division.

Chinese immigrants are also linguistically diverse (Yang 1999; Zhou 2001). The earlier Chinese immigrants, most of whom originated from
Guangdong, usually spoke Taishanese. Most contemporary immigrants from mainland China speak Mandarin, while most immigrants from Hong Kong speak Cantonese. Legal and illegal immigrants from Fujin speak Fujianese. Since the written characters and basic grammars are the same across all Chinese dialects, educated Chinese immigrants do not have difficulty reading Chinese-language written materials, including ethnic dailies. But language is still a barrier to Chinese immigrants’ oral communication and access to the TV and radio media.

By contrast, Korean immigrants are characterized by a high level of group homogeneity (Min 1991). South Korea, from which Korean immigrants originated, is a very small, culturally homogeneous society. Korean immigrants have only one language and regional differences are insignificant in their ethnic identity. The Korean community in New York City has developed sophisticated Korean language media, including several Korean TV and radio stations and three Korean-language dailies, which integrate geographically dispersed Korean immigrants with news and information about the Korean community and their home country (Min 2001, p. 189).

Religion

Religion is another important source of ethnic attachment. The literature on religion and ethnicity indicates that religion contributes to ethnicity in two basically different ways. First, religion contributes to ethnic attachment mainly because congregation-based social and cultural activities help members maintain their ethnic cultural traditions and/or social networks. Studies of the earlier Judeo-Christian white immigrant groups have emphasized the ethnic retention function of religious congregations (Warner and Srole 1945; Herberg 1960; Greeley 1972). Studies of contemporary Third World immigrant groups support the same hypothesis that participation in religious congregations enhances ethnic attachment (Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 1992; Warner 1994; Bankston III and Zhou 1995).

Second, religion helps members of a group preserve their cultural traditions and identity through practice of religious rituals at home. The above-cited studies of Judeo-Christian immigrant groups have neglected to pay attention to the positive effects of family rituals on preservation of ethnic culture and identity. However, studies of contemporary immigrant groups, involving many non-Christians and non-white Catholics, have paid special attention to the effects of ‘domestic religions’ on ethnic preservation (Stevens-Arroyo and Diaz-Stevens 1994; Wellmeier 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000).

Religious practices should be considered an important factor that determines differences in ethnic attachment among Korean, Chinese,
Indian and Korean groups. Indian and Korean immigrants are known to be very active in religious practices (Fenton 1988; Williams 1988; Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 1992, 2005; Kurien 2007). Almost all Indian immigrants have a religion, with a majority being Hindus and the rest being Muslims, Sikhs, Christians or Jains (Fenton 1988; Williams 1988, p. 37; Kurien 2007). About 75 per cent of Korean immigrants are affiliated with Korean Christian churches, with Korean Christians participating in congregations with exceptional frequency (Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 1992; Kim and Kim 2001). These studies show that Korean Protestants’ frequent participation in ethnic churches has helped them maintain Korean cultural traditions and ethnic networks, while Indian Hindus’ active religious practices at home are effective in helping them preserve Indian cultural traditions and identity (Williams 1988, p. 42; Min 2005; Kurien 2007).

Chinese immigrants have a disadvantage in maintaining ethnic attachment through religion because only a small proportion of them are affiliated with a religion. According to results of the 2003 New Immigrant Survey, only 26 per cent of the 2003 immigrants from mainland China chose a religion: 15 per cent Christian religions and 11 per cent Buddhism. The fact that a predominant majority of Chinese immigrants are not affiliated with a religion suggests that they lack the benefit for ethnic attachment deriving from either domestic or institutional religious practices.

As noted above, religion serves as the major sub-ethnic boundary-marker for Indian immigrants. By contrast, religion does not play a significant role in sub-ethnic division for Chinese and Korean immigrants. Unlike India, neither China nor Korea has a long history of religious conflicts, and conversion from one religion to another is relatively easy in these East Asian countries (Tamney 1993). In fact, many Chinese and Korean Buddhist and atheist immigrants have converted to Christianity since their migration to the US (Hurh and Kim 1990; Min 1992; Yang 1999). The only religious factor that may moderately contribute to the sub-ethnic division in the Korean community is the prevalence of evangelical Christians among immigrants and their children. Korean evangelical Christians, especially second-generation Christians, have strong religious identity but weak ethnic identity (Chai 1998).

**Educational level and fluency in English**

As Hurh and Kim (1984) have shown, ethnic attachment does not necessarily exclude assimilation. Some Asian immigrants actively participate in the mainstream society in terms of using English and making friends with white Americans. But their active participation in the larger society may not reduce their attachment to the ethnic
community. However, immigrants with little education and a severe language barrier are likely to be confined to the ethnic enclave because they cannot participate in the larger society. Thus they have no option but to maintain strong ethnic attachment with no integration into the larger society. Chinese, Indian, and Korean immigrants have significant differences in educational level and fluency in English. Because of their selective professional migration, Indian immigrants have an exceptionally high educational level. According to the 2000 US Census, 61 per cent of Indian immigrants aged 25–64 years in the New York central city had completed a college education, with 35 per cent having earned an advanced degree. Also, because of their high educational level and use of English in India, a predominant majority of them speak English very well (71 per cent) or well (21 per cent).

Immigrants from mainland China who have settled in New York City are polarized socioeconomically between people with no high-school education and college graduates (Kwong 1997). The class polarization of Chinese immigrants is closely related to their immigration patterns. A large number of Chinese immigrants initially came to the US as international students for a graduate education in the late 1970s and 1980s. Many of them changed their status to become permanent residents after they completed their graduate education. But large numbers of lower-class Chinese from mainland China have come to the US since the mid-1980s, many as undocumented immigrants (Liang 2001). Proportionally, more of these immigrants have settled in New York City. As a result of the influx of these lower-class Chinese to the city over the last two decades, Chinese immigrants in New York City have a substantially lower educational level than those in the US as a whole and have a higher level of class polarization (Kwong 1997). According to the 2000 Census, almost half (49 per cent) of Chinese immigrants in the city had no high-school education, with a majority of them having difficulty speaking English. By contrast, Taiwanese immigrants are highly educated, with nearly 70 per cent having obtained a college degree in 2000.

Korean immigrants in the city have substantially lower educational and occupational levels than Indian or Taiwanese immigrants, but are more homogeneous in terms of class than Chinese immigrants. The 2000 Census showed that 44 per cent of Korean immigrants aged 25–64 years had attained a college education, with 88 per cent having completed high school. Sixty per cent of Korean immigrants spoke English well or very well.

Partly by virtue of their socioeconomic background and fluency in English, Indian immigrants in New York City are likely to be more integrated into the larger society, and as a result attach to the ethnic community to a lesser degree than Korean or Chinese immigrants.
Partly due to the presence of many ‘no high school’ and ‘no English’ residents, Chinese immigrants have the highest level of confinement to the immigrant enclave among the three Asian groups (Zhou 2003). But, as noted above, Chinese immigrants have a disadvantage in terms of ethnic attachment, mainly because of their lack of religious affiliation.

Data sources

Data for this paper are drawn from a larger survey study of Chinese, Indian, and Korean immigrants that was conducted in 2005–2006. For the survey, we used the surname sampling technique, a technique often used for research on minority and immigrant groups (Shin and Yu 1984; Rosenwaike 1994; Min 1996; Bozorgmehr 1997). For a random sampling of Korean immigrants, we used the Kim sampling technique (Shin and Yu 1984). Approximately 22 per cent of the population in Korea has the surname Kim, and Kims represent the Korean population socioeconomically (Shin and Yu 1984). For a representative sampling of Chinese immigrants, we used five prominent Chinese surnames, while to get a random sample of Indian immigrants, we selected seventeen prominent Indian surnames. We used five 2004 New York City public telephone directories as sampling frames. We randomly selected 800 households with the selected surname(s) for each group from the sampling frames, hoping to interview 300 immigrants for each group.

Many immigrants of Indian ancestry have immigrated from Guyana and other Caribbean countries. These Caribbean Indian immigrants also have Indian surnames. But through the initial screening they were eliminated from the interviews because, according to our observations, they usually identify as Guyanese or another Caribbean nationality unless they are forced to choose their racial category. Chinese surnames include Chinese immigrants who have originated from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other Asian countries. Native-born Asian Americans and those 1.5-generation Asians who immigrated at 12 or younger were eliminated from the interviews.

The questionnaire included more than fifty questions, mostly closed-ended items. The questionnaire items can be divided into three categories: personal background, ethnic (sub-ethnic) attachment, and occupational and economic adjustments. This article is based on about twenty questions related to ethnic and sub-ethnic attachments, religion, and some items related to personal background. We have previously pointed out that ethnic attachment does not necessarily exclude assimilation. Nevertheless, in order to examine differentials in ethnic and sub-ethnic attachments among the three groups effectively,
we phrased the questions in such a way that ethnic attachment and assimilation maintain the zero-sum relationship.

Sixteen bilingual Chinese, Indian, and Korean students conducted the telephone interviews at the senior author’s college between March and May 2005. They interviewed either the household head or their spouse, provided they were aged 23 years or over and participated in the labour force. Korean and Chinese respondents were interviewed based on the Korean and Chinese language translations of the questionnaire, while Indian respondents were interviewed in English. It took five to thirty minutes to complete each telephone interview. About one-third of the Chinese and Korean selected households were not eligible for the interview because they were non-immigrant, 1.5 or second-generation households or did not have a worker. A higher proportion of the selected Indian households, nearly half, were not eligible for the interview because Caribbean Indian immigrants with Indian surnames were also eliminated. Out of those eligible households, 285 Chinese, 277 Korean, and 217 Indians were successfully interviewed.

Indian Muslim immigrants with Muslim names were not included in the Indian sample based on prominent Indian surnames. Thus, two Indian Muslim students contacted thirty-nine Indian Muslim immigrants through their personal channels and interviewed them separately. We also found that the Indian surname sample did not include Christians who also have their religious names. Thus two Indian graduate students contacted thirty-one Indian Christian immigrants, mainly through Indian churches and partly through their personal channels. To increase two sub-samples of Chinese immigrants, we additionally selected 150 households with two major Chinese surnames who mostly likely originated from Hong Kong, and another 150 households with five surnames who mostly likely emigrated from Taiwan. Two Chinese students interviewed eighty-seven additional ethnic Chinese immigrants, almost all of them originating from Taiwan or Hong Kong. Thus the total sample consists of 372 Chinese, 277 Korean, and 287 Indian immigrant respondents.

Statistics on independent variables

In this section, we introduce the respondents’ sub-ethnic categories, affiliations with religions, and educational and English-language fluency levels – information about major independent variables in this study. Table 1 shows three major sub-ethnic categories for each of the three comparison groups. Chinese respondents consist of three major national origin groups: mainland Chinese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong immigrants. Mainland Chinese respondents comprise 64 per cent, with Taiwanese and Hong Kong respondents comprising 21 per cent
Table 1. *Sub-ethnic categories and religious affiliations of Chinese, Korean, and Indian respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>Hong Kong</th>
<th>Other countries</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chinese respondents’ nation origins and religions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religions</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Protestantism</th>
<th>Catholicism</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Other religions</th>
<th>No religion</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Korean respondents’ religious distribution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hinduism</th>
<th>Sikhism</th>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Jainism</th>
<th>No religion</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indian respondents’ religions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and 14 per cent respectively. These proportions do not reflect the actual sub-ethnic distribution of the Chinese immigrant population in New York City. Since the same surname is pronounced differently in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, depending upon which English surname spellings we select we can over-sample one or another sub-group.

As expected, more than two-thirds of Chinese respondents do not have a religion, with Buddhists and Christians comprising 22 per cent and 10 per cent. Given the restriction of religious freedom in China under the Communist government, it is not surprising to find that more Taiwanese respondents (48 per cent) than mainland Chinese respondents (26 per cent) had a religion. Protestants and Catholics comprise 58 per cent and 14 per cent respectively of Korean respondents while Buddhists comprise only 8 per cent. The statistics on the religious distribution of Korean respondents presented in Table 1 reflect the actual religious distributions among Korean immigrants in New York City, because the survey is based on a random sampling technique.

Fifty-two percent of Indian respondents are Hindus, with Sikhs, Muslims and Christians comprising 18 per cent, 14 per cent and 11 per cent. These statistics do not represent the actual proportions of the four Indian religious groups in New York City, because Indian Muslim and Christian respondents were interviewed separately through a non-random procedure. According to the results of the 2003 New Immigrant Survey, Hindus comprised 68 per cent of Indian immigrants in 2003, with Christians, Sikhs, and Muslims comprising 12 per cent, 12 per cent, and 5 per cent.

Table 2 compares the three immigrant groups on educational level and fluency in English, the two human capital variables that are likely to contribute to differentials in ethnic attachment among the three groups. Indian respondents have a much higher educational level than the other two groups, while Chinese respondents have the lowest educational level. The statistics on the respondents’ educational level are similar to those for the three immigrant groups in New York City derived from the 2000 US Census, summarized above.

As expected, a predominant majority of Indian respondents (82 per cent) reported speaking English well or fluently, while most Chinese and Korean immigrants chose the other two categories (not at all or a little). While a higher proportion of Chinese than Korean respondents speak English well or fluently, a higher proportion of Chinese (25 per cent) than Korean (8 per cent) respondents also cannot speak English at all. Chinese respondents include more immigrants with a severe language barrier than Korean respondents because of the presence of many respondents with no high-school education.
Table 2. Comparison of Chinese, Korean, and Indian respondents in educational level and fluency in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level (%)</th>
<th>Fluency in English</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>'Well'</th>
<th>Fluent</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Advanced degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 compares the three groups on cultural ethnic attachment. The respondents were asked to indicate the frequencies of (1) speaking their ethnic language vs. English, (2) reading ethnic newspapers vs. American newspapers, (3) watching ethnic TV and radio programmes vs. American TV and radio programmes, (4) eating ethnic food for dinner vs. American food, and (5) using the ethnic name vs. the American name. They were told to answer by choosing one of five ordinal-variable categories of (1) most of the time English, (2) more often English, (3) about half and half, (4) more often ethnic, and (5) almost always ethnic (for Question 5, no American name, almost always use the ethnic name). We could use ANOVA to compare the mean values of the three groups for each cultural ethnic attachment variable. But, since these mean values are not easy to understand for those readers not familiar with statistics, we have collapsed the five categories into two (the first four categories and the highest category) so that readers can better understand the meanings of the percentage differentials among the three groups.

Korean and Chinese respondents show significantly higher levels than Indian respondents on the first four cultural ethnic attachment variables. Indian immigrants with much higher levels of education and fluency in English are more acculturated to American society than Chinese and Korean immigrants. Thus, not surprisingly, Indian respondents show a lower level of ethnic attachment on the four cultural ethnic attachment variables.

There is only one variable on which Indian respondents show a higher level of cultural ethnic attachment than Korean or Chinese respondents: using an ethnic name vs. an American name. While over 90 per cent of Indian respondents reported having no American name and thus always using their ethnic name, only a little more than half of Chinese and Korean respondents chose the same category. Indian immigrants usually use ethnic names all the time without having American names because most of their ethnic names have symbolic meanings related to their religion or state of origin. Members of the three Indian religious minority groups usually have religious first and/or last names. Even for Hindus their first names often symbolize the Hindu religion or their place of origin. For these reasons, they usually do not change their birth names even for informal use, unless they have become extremely secularized. By contrast, many Chinese and Koreans (about 45 per cent in each case) have adopted American names for use when interacting with non-ethnic members at the workplace, although few of them have legally changed their names. Although highly acculturated in other ways, Indian immigrants
continue to use their ethnic names because of their strong attachments to their religion and/or place of origin.

Table 4 shows the results of data analysis regarding social ethnic attachment among the three Asian groups. As measured by the first three variables, Korean respondents maintain the highest level of social ethnic attachment while Chinese respondents have the lowest level. Korean immigrants’ active involvement in ethnic networks is possible mainly because of their high affiliation with and exceptionally frequent participation in ethnic churches. Ninety per cent of Korean Protestant respondents and 78 per cent of Catholic respondents were found to attend church once or more often weekly. Chinese respondents’ very low level of social ethnic attachment on the first two variables is mainly due to their low rate of religious affiliation. We previously noted in Table 1 that only 33 per cent of Chinese respondents were affiliated with a religion, with two-thirds of them being Buddhists. Even many of these few Chinese religious respondents were not affiliated with a religious organization, because Chinese Buddhist immigrants, like other Asian Buddhist immigrants, usually practise their religion at home.

Although almost all Indian respondents have a religion, they have a lower level of social ethnic attachment than Korean respondents. This is mainly due to Indian Hindus’ less active participation in a religious institution than Korean Christians. Indian Hindus, who comprise a
majority of Indian respondents, usually practise religious rituals at home almost every day, but do not attend temple regularly (Williams 1988; Min 2005; Kurien 2007). Most of them visit different temples monthly or even less frequently. Only 35 per cent of Indian Hindu respondents reported that they attended temple once weekly or more often, with only a few of them indicating that they were affiliated with a temple. Indian minority religious groups are involved in organized religious practices to a greater extent than Hindus, with 68 per cent of religious minority respondents found to participate in a religious institution every week or more often.

Social ethnic attachment includes not only participation in formal ethnic organizations, but also involvement in informal ethnic friendship networks. The last two variables in Table 4 indicate this dimension of social ethnic attachment. A slightly higher proportion of Indian respondents than Korean or Chinese respondents reported eating dinner with ethnic friends at home. Indian Hindu immigrants celebrate several religious holidays at home annually, eating vegetarian foods with their relatives and friends. This religious practice seems to largely explain the slightly higher proportion of Indian respondents dining at home with ethnic friends. However, this does not mean that Chinese or Korean immigrants enjoy ethnic friendships involving dinner or lunch meetings to a lesser extent than Indian immigrants. There are large numbers of Chinese and Korean restaurants in New York City, offering excellent ethnic foods for reasonable prices. Thus Chinese and Korean immigrants usually eat lunch or dinner with their friends in ethnic restaurants, instead of cooking at home. By contrast, for

### Table 4. Comparison of Chinese, Korean, and Indian respondents in social ethnic attachment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th></th>
<th>Korean</th>
<th></th>
<th>Indian</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of affiliated ethnic organizations – At least one organization</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Frequency of participation in meetings of ethnic organizations – Once or more often per week</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Frequency of eating dinner with ethnic friends at home – Once every two weeks or more often</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ethnic and racial compositions of five best friends – Three ethnic friends among the five best friends</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

religious and cultural reasons, Indian immigrants eat out with ethnic friends much less often than the other two groups (Khandelwal 2002, p. 37).

While Chinese respondents maintain the lowest level of social ethnic attachment in terms of affiliation with and participation in formal ethnic organizations, they show the highest level of social ethnic attachment in informal ethnic friendship. Ninety-five per cent of them have at least three ethnic friends among their five best friends, compared to 88 per cent of Korean respondents and 74 per cent of Indians. Indian respondents seem to show the lowest level of involvement in co-ethnic friendship networks, mainly because, being highly educated and fluent in English, a vast majority of them participate in the mainstream economy, actively interacting with non-Indian citizens in the workplace.

Findings about ethnic identity and sub-ethnic attachment

In this section, we will compare the three groups on sub-ethnic attachment and identity, and loyalty to the original homeland. Table 5 divides respondents’ best friends into the ethnic, white, and other categories, and then further divides ethnic friends into ‘sub-ethnic’ and ‘other ethnic’ categories. In this way, we can see the levels of not only their ethnic, but also their sub-ethnic attachment.

Before discussing the results of data analysis presented in Table 5, we need to clarify the definitions of the sub-ethnic category. In cases where Korean Christian respondents have selected their best friends from members of their own churches, we consider them as belonging to the sub-ethnic category. When Chinese respondents from other

| Table 5. Comparison of Chinese, Korean, and Indian immigrants in sub-ethnic, ethnic, and racial composition of best friends |
|----------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                      | Chinese | Korean | Indian |
|                                      | N  | %    | N  | %    | N  | %    |
| Ethnic:                               |    |      |    |      |    |      |
| Sub-ethnic                            | 357 | 96   | 258 | 93   | 265 | 92   |
| Other ethnic                          | 271 | 73   | 88* | 32*  | 204 | 71   |
| White                                 | 86  | 23   | 170 | 61   | 61  | 21   |
| Others                                | 4   | 1    | 15  | 5    | 11  | 4    |
| Total                                 | 370 | 100  | 275 | 100  | 287 | 100  |

*A sub-ethnic member as the best friend for the Korean group indicates a member the same church as the best friend for Korean Christian respondents

countries than mainland China have their best friends among members of the same national origin group or when mainland Chinese respondents have their best friends among members of the same province, we consider their best friends as belonging to the sub-ethnic category. In a similar way, when Indian religious minority respondents have their best friends from members of their own religious group or when Indian Hindus have their best friends from the same state of India, we consider their best friends as belonging to the sub-ethnic category.

Table 5 shows that all three groups have a great tendency to choose their best friends from co-ethnic members, as more than 90 per cent of the respondents indicated that co-ethnic members were their best friends. But the most significant finding from this table is that the vast majority of Chinese and Indian respondents (more than 70 per cent) have sub-ethnic members as their best friends, compared to only 32 per cent for Korean respondents. Korean Christian immigrants maintain strong friendship networks with members of the same church. Given this, the finding that 32 per cent of Korean respondents have their best friends from members of the same church is not surprising. But, as will be shown later, Korean immigrants, with the exception of a small proportion of evangelical Protestants, hold strong national identity and thus do not maintain separate sub-ethnic boundaries based on religion. Many Korean respondents have their best friends from the same religious organization simply because they meet with members of their church more frequently than with other Koreans. But they do not limit their social interactions to church members alone.

However, the strong tendency of Indian religious minority or Hindu respondents to choose their best friends from their own religious group or from the same state supports the view that religion or the state of origin is an important basis for the sub-ethnic division for Indian immigrants. Eighty per cent of non-Hindu respondents, compared to 63 per cent of Hindu respondents, had sub-ethnic members as their best friends. This finding indicates that religion is a more important sub-ethnic boundary marker than the state of origin. Also, 79 per cent of Taiwanese and Hong Kong respondents, compared to 69 per cent of mainland Chinese respondents, chose sub-ethnic members as their best friends. This finding indicates that national origin is a more important basis for Chinese immigrants’ sub-ethnic boundary than the province of origin, but that the latter is also important for their sub-ethnic friendship patterns. The fact that Chinese and Indian immigrants largely confine their friendship networks to members of their own sub-group also suggests that they are weakly attached to the broad Chinese or Indian community and their original homeland.

We asked the respondents to choose their identity label from the following six categories: (1) American, (2) Asian American, (3) regional
(South or East Asian), (4) hyphenated-American (Chinese, Korean or Indian American), (5) national (Chinese, Korean or Indian), (6) sub-ethnic (Taiwanese/Hong Kong Chinese or Taiwanese/Hong Kongese, Indian Muslim or Indian Christian, or Korean Christian), and (7) other. Table 6 presents the results of data analysis based on the responses to the question.

Proportionally, more Indian respondents chose the American, Asian American or regional (South Asian) identity than Chinese or Korean respondents. Also, more Indian respondents chose the hyphenated-American identity, which suggests that they are more acculturated to American society. In addition, seven Indian respondents chose a purely religious identity, such as Sikh or Muslim, without connecting to the Indian background. These findings suggest that Indian immigrants maintain a lower level of psychological ethnic attachment than Chinese or Korean respondents.

Another important finding from the table is that about one-quarter of Chinese and Indian respondents chose the sub-ethnic label for their identity, compared to only 6 per cent of Korean respondents. The small number of Korean respondents who chose the sub-ethnic label (N=17) consists of several die-hard evangelical Protestants who identify themselves mainly as Korean Christian. For them their religious identity is so strong that they may accept being Christian as their primary identity and being Korean as their secondary identity. They comprise about 10 per cent of Korean Protestant respondents.

Given that Chinese and Indian immigrants are divided into several sub-ethnic groups based on religion, national origin and/or provincial origin, it is not surprising that much larger proportions of their respondents chose the sub-ethnic identity label than Korean respondents. Only 29 per cent of Indian respondents chose the national

Table 6. Comparison of Chinese, Korean, and Indian respondents in choices of ethnic identity labels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Type</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Korean</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American, Asian American or regional (East or South Asian)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious identity (Muslim or Sikh)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyphenated American (Chinese, Korean or Indian American)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National (Chinese, Korean or Indian)</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-ethnic (Taiwanese, Hong Kong Chinese or Taiwanese, Hong Kongese, Indian Muslim or Indian Christian, or Korean Christian)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

identity label. A higher proportion of Chinese respondents (43 per cent) than Indian respondents chose the national identity label, but it was substantially lower than that of Korean respondents (about two-thirds). A vast majority of Chinese respondents who chose the sub-ethnic identity label were found to be immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong, while almost all Indian respondents who chose the sub-ethnic label were Muslims, Sikhs or Christians.

To measure the degree of their loyalty to homeland, we asked the respondents which team they would cheer for if the US team were to play against the Chinese, Indian, or Korean team in an Olympic soccer or cricket game. We told them to answer the question by choosing one of the following five categories: (1) definitely, (2) probably the US team, (3) I don’t know (neutral), (4) probably, and (5) definitely the Chinese, Korean or Indian team. Collapsing the first three categories into one, we divide their responses into three categories in Table 7. The data show that Korean immigrants are far more loyal to their homeland than the other two groups. Ninety per cent of Korean respondents reported that they would definitely cheer for the Korean team, with only 6 per cent choosing the US team or taking the neutral position.

It is surprising that only 40 per cent of Chinese respondents expressed strong support for the Chinese team with no reservation at all. It can be said that the other 60 per cent of Chinese respondents did not show strong loyalty to China. Cross-tabulation analysis shows that 43 per cent of the mainland Chinese respondents, compared to 28 per cent of Taiwanese respondents, chose the last category (‘definitely the Chinese team’). Given that Taiwan and China have maintained semi-hostile relations, it is not surprising that such a small proportion of Taiwanese respondents gave full support for the Chinese team. Those Taiwanese respondents who gave strong support for the Chinese team are likely to have been born and to have grown up in mainland China and moved to Taiwan as adults after the 1949 Communist

Table 7. Comparison of Chinese, Korean, and Indian immigrant respondents in loyalty to homeland measured by their cheering for the original homeland team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chinese N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Korean N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Indian N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely or probably the US team, or I don’t know</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably the Chinese, Korean or Indian team</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely the Chinese, Korean or Indian team</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

takeover. But it is surprising that less than half of the mainland Chinese respondents expressed strong support for the Chinese team. Most of them seem to have given only lukewarm support for the Chinese team mainly because they did not politically accept the Communist government in China. 7

Even the proportion of Indian respondents (52 per cent) who expressed strong support for their home team is much lower than that of Korean respondents (90 per cent). Not surprisingly, higher proportions of Indian Hindus (58 per cent) and Jains (62 per cent) than Indian Sikhs (42 per cent) and Christians (36 per cent) reported their willingness to definitely cheer for the Indian team. Surprisingly, the proportion of Indian Muslim respondents who expressed strong support for the Indian team (54 per cent) is only slightly lower than that of Hindu respondents (58 per cent).

**Conclusion**

In comparing Chinese, Korean, and Indian immigrants in their ethnic and sub-ethnic attachments, we considered the level of group homogeneity, religion, and educational and English fluency levels to be three major contributing factors. The above analyses show that, as expected, each factor has contributed to differential levels of ethnic attachment and sub-ethnic divisions. The differential levels of education and fluency in English seem to have made the most contribution to the group differentials in cultural ethnic attachment. Thus Indian respondents, who have much higher levels of education and fluency in English, show a significantly lower level of cultural ethnic attachment than the other two Asian groups. The Chinese show the lowest level of formal ethnic affiliation among the three groups, mainly due to their much lower level of religious affiliation. But all three groups show extremely high levels of informal ethnic networks.

It is a well known fact that Chinese and Indian immigrants have sub-ethnic divisions based on national origin, religion, regional origin and/or language, while Korean immigrants are characterized by a high level of ethnic homogeneity. The sub-cultural differences among sub-ethnic groups of Chinese or Indian immigrants are so obvious that we do not need survey data to measure them. However, the effects of Chinese and Indian immigrants’ sub-ethnic divisions on their social networks, ethnic identity, and loyalty to their original homeland are not so obvious. Nevertheless, no previous study has examined these effects with survey data. Thus the differences among these three Asian immigrant groups in sub-ethnic social attachment patterns in this study are more interesting than those in ethnic attachment patterns. Although all three groups of respondents maintain extremely high levels of ethnic friendship networks, Chinese and Indian respondents
largely limit their close friendships to their sub-ethnic group. This finding suggests that Chinese and Indian immigrants are weakly tied to co-ethnic members outside of their sub-ethnic category. By contrast, Korean respondents, characterized by group homogeneity, tend to maintain close friendships with all other Koreans, although many Korean Christians choose their best friends from members of the same church, mainly because of their frequent social interactions.

Chinese and Indian immigrants’ sub-ethnic divisions are reflected in their ethnic identity and loyalty to their immediate or original homeland. Much larger proportions of Chinese and Indian respondents chose the sub-ethnic identity label than Korean respondents. However, a much larger proportion of Korean respondents, 65 per cent, chose the national ethnic identity label. While Chinese respondents hold a higher level of national identity than Indian respondents, they show the lowest level of loyalty to their immediate or original homeland among the three groups. For ideological and political reasons, immigrants not only from Taiwan and Hong Kong, but also from mainland China do not like the Communist government and thus give lukewarm support for the Chinese team.

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Notes

1. People of Chinese ancestry settled in Vietnam, the Philippines and other Asian countries are known to concentrate in businesses and maintain their Chinese ethnic culture and identity fairly successfully. These overseas Chinese have been treated as ethnic Chinese instead of as a sub-ethnic group of the respective national-origin group.
2. The 2003 New Immigrant Survey is a nationally representative survey study, based on a sample of 8,573 adult immigrants aged 18 years and over from the 2002 cohort of immigrants, conducted by Guillermima Jasso, Douglas Massy, Mark Rosenweig and James Smith. The survey data set is available to the public for analysis.
4. The five selected prominent Chinese names are Wong (Wang), Chin, Chen (Chan), Ng, Lin, and Jang.
5. Only two Indian names, Patel and Singh, are prominent Indian names, each of which covers several pages of the New York City public telephone directories. But unlike Kim for the Korean group, neither name statistically represents the Indian immigrant population; a large proportion of Patels are Hindus from Gujarat while Singhs are heavily Sikhs. Therefore, we added the following fifteen Indian surnames: Das, Dhar, Dhillon, Ghosh, Gupta, Jain, Kumar, Mehta, Pal, Prashad, Rao, Roy, Sen, Srivastava, and Sinha. But we found none of these fifteen additional surnames was a prominent Indian name, in the sense that the name covers several pages of the telephone directories.

6. Only staff members are affiliated with Indian Hindu temples.

7. Remember that many Chinese immigrants are political refugees who chose to change their status to permanent residents in the US because of human rights violations in China.

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