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Ethnic Identity, Acculturative Stress, News Uses, and Two Domains of Civic Engagement: A Case of Korean Immigrants in the United States

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This study examines the roles of ethnic identity, acculturative stress, and news media use in explaining Korean immigrants’ civic engagement. An online survey of 1,135 Korean immigrants revealed that a strong Korean identity facilitated their engagement in the U.S. Korean community. However, this coethnic civic engagement was not mirrored by a corresponding civic engagement in their host society. Acculturative stress influenced a particular pattern of news media use: Immigrant Koreans who felt acculturative stress tended to consume more ethnic news media and less U.S. news media than those who did not suffer from acculturative stress. This particular media use pattern held...
them back from engaging in the civic activities related to mainstream U.S. society.

INTRODUCTION

Integrating ethnic minorities and immigrants into the mainstream public sphere is a challenge faced by most democratic societies. Various theoretical approaches offer accounts of the barriers against and the catalysts of civic engagement, and some of these approaches pay attention to special features of ethnic minorities’ and immigrants’ ways of life. Ethnic minorities and immigrants, for instance, tend to live together, maintaining ethnically homogeneous communities (Cutler & Glaeser, 1997; Massey & Denton, 1992, 1993). Although this bonding tendency might be an inevitable consequence of the need to survive in a new environment (Edin, Fredrikson, & Aslund, 2003), it raises the concern that strong ethnic communities insulate ethnic minorities and immigrants from mainstream society (Brenton, Hartmann, Lennards, & Reed, 2004; Huckfeldt, 1986; Uslander & Conley, 2003).

Conversely, in advancing ideas about multiculturalism and multicultural democracy, scholars have argued that strong ethnic communities are essential if immigrants/members of ethnic minorities are to become active citizens in the host society (Fennema & Tillie, 1999, 2001; Jacobs & Tillie, 2004; Marri, 2003; Seo, 2011). Given the challenges of adjusting their lives to a different context, newcomers may not consider civic engagement in mainstream society to be a priority. Members of ethnic communities, instead, may accumulate civic experiences by engaging in their own ethnic communities that are germane to and eventually foster civic engagement in mainstream society.

In the context of this debate, the present study examines factors identified as likely to be implicated in accounting for the two domains of immigrants’ civic engagement: coethnic civic engagement and general civic engagement. In particular, this study emphasizes factors relevant to the lives of immigrant populations: the roles of ethnic identity, acculturative stress, and mainstream and ethnic news media in explaining the nature and extent of immigrants’ civic engagement both in their own communities and in mainstream community.

The study population is Korean immigrants who live in the United States. Immigrants from Asian countries are one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States, yet the level of their civic engagement does not correspond to their population growth (Lau, Cho, Kim, & Taketa, 2001; Tam, 1995). Although various ethnic groups from Asia are often treated as homogenous, they are quite different in several important ways such as immigration history, language, social-political experience, and religious background (Okamoto, 2003). For instance, unlike Asian immigrants who came
to the United States as refugees from wars and conflicts in their homelands (e.g., Cambodia, Vietnam, and Hmong), immigrants from Far East countries (e.g., China, Japan, and Korea) arrived in the United States in large numbers after the Immigration Act of 1965 had been enacted. Because of immigration restrictions, members of this latter group were generally better educated than were the refugees (Chan, 1991). Within immigrant groups from Far East countries, the groups vary in terms of their political socialization and experience of democratic society. These differences could be important to their acculturation experiences and thus to their respective civic engagement. The present study focuses on Korean immigrants as a distinct group, therefore, as considering immigrants from numerous Asian countries as constituting a single category would be flawed given the emphasis of this study. On this basis, the methods used herein could be applied to other groups such that their respective experiences could be compared on a like with like basis—on which basis clear differences and similarities would emerge.

ETHNIC IDENTITY, ACCULTURATIVE STRESS, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Engaging in civic activities is not without cost. It requires a person to invest time and/or money, and it is sometimes necessary for people to develop a particular skill set (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). It makes sense, therefore, to predict that those with considerable resources at their disposal are more likely to engage in various types of civic activities than are those without such resources. In fact, this is a main thesis of civic participation models based on socioeconomic status (SES; e.g., M. M. Conway, 1991; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba & Nie, 1972). Although it is reasonable to count access to considerable resources as a critical factor supporting civic engagement, it doesn’t seem sufficient to explain why some people are involved in civic activities and others are not. Scholars especially recognize civic engagement as a typical example of the “collective action dilemma” or the “collective action problem.” In other words, individuals who participate in civic activities are responsible for the associated costs, whereas the benefits of civic engagement are often indirect, long term, and collectively distributed. From the point of view of the rational-choice model, therefore, civic engagement might not be a particularly attractive way for individuals to invest limited resources (Olson, 1968). Researchers have noted that individuals could overcome the collective action dilemma by identifying their interests with those of the collective (e.g., Klandermans, 2002). In other words, according to this position, those who take an active part in public life have a strong attachment to their collective and trust the people who compose it.
Prior research shows that a strong group identity or group consciousness is often manifested in people’s civic-minded actions on behalf of their own group (e.g., Guterbock & London, 1983; London, 1975; London & Giles, 1987; Verba & Nie, 1972). Such a sense of ethnic identity, forged by being closely connected to the in-group and emotionally attached to one’s own ethnic culture (Jackson & Smith, 1999), could mean that members of ethnic minorities see their individual fates as linked to that of the group as a whole (Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2003). This understanding of interdependency and linked fate is a key to overcoming the collective action dilemma (Klandermans, 2002). It is reasonable to expect that ethnic identity encourages immigrants to participate in civic-minded work, especially on behalf of their own ethnic community. In other words, people who maintain a strong Korean identity are more likely to see their own success as connected to and even inseparable from the success of the Korean community as a whole, which encourages them to invest their resources in their ethnic community. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There will be a positive relationship between Korean identity and coethnic civic engagement (i.e., civic engagement for Korean communities in the United States).

Immigrants leave behind a familiar culture in order to negotiate a new one, and in doing so they may experience language barriers and/or suffer a lack of financial resources. They might be disappointed with the gap between what they had dreamed of and the reality in which they find themselves. Some might be frustrated by encountering social prejudice or discrimination. Any and all of these factors could constitute acute and/or chronic stress, also known as acculturative stress (Ding & Hargraves, 2009; Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991). Research has shown that second- and even third-generation immigrants are not free of acculturative stress (Cordova & Cervantes, 2010; Dawson & Panchanadeswaran, 2010).

The acculturation process is by no means uniform. Various individual and situational forces can affect it (Alba & Nee, 2003; Berry, 1997; Deaux, 2006). Some people adapt smoothly to a host culture and immediately begin to develop a strong attachment to the host society. Others withdraw from mainstream society and sometimes even from their own ethnic community, thereby manifesting and perhaps worsening acculturative stress. Given that civic engagement is often regarded as evidence of successful acculturation (Kim, 1979), acculturative stress could play a significant role in explaining, at least in part, why some immigrants do not participate in civic engagement for either the host society or their own ethnic community.

Bhattacharya (2011) found a negative relationship between acculturative stress and social capital. In her study of Indian immigrants living in New
York City, she argued that acculturative stress hinders immigrants’ sense of belonging to a society and their connectedness with others. Other studies have also found that acculturative stress erodes immigrants’ affinity for mainstream society (e.g., Cooper & Cooper, 2008), which in turn tends to mitigate against civic engagement in mainstream society. Acculturative stress could also induce a person to withdraw from his or her own cultural heritage. Immigrants who feel acculturative stress feel negative about own ethnic culture and community, leading them to turn away from civic engagement even in their own ethnic community (e.g., Liebkind, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Solheim, 2004).

Based on the previous discussion, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

H2: There will be a negative relationship between acculturative stress and mainstream civic engagement (i.e., civic engagement for mainstream society).

H3: There will be a negative relationship between acculturative stress and coethnic civic engagement.

ETHNIC MEDIA, MAINSTREAM MEDIA, AND TWO DOMAINS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The significant role of ethnic media in immigrants’ acculturation processes has drawn considerable scholarly attention (Jeffres, 1999; Johnson, 2000; Moon & Park, 2007; Vishwanath & Arora, 2000). A Chicago School sociologist, Robert Park (1922/1970), for instance, conducted extensive research on the immigrant press in the United States and contended that the ethnic media held center stage in understanding how immigrant groups attempt to find a place in U.S. society. With the example of the immigrants’ newspapers, Park argued that ethnic media serves as a powerful institution to keep the mother language from disintegrating and that it also helps immigrants integrate into the host society by delivering essential information about U.S. society, together with discourses on central values of and prevailing attitudes in their host society.

Studies that adapted the uses and gratifications approach suggest that immigrants seek gratification from ethnic media that differ from the gratifications they seek from mainstream media (Jeffres, 1999; Shim & Salmon, 1990; Walker, 1999). Soruco (1996), for instance, found that immigrants use ethnic media for several main reasons: to obtain information about their country of origin; to preserve their cultural bonds and their native language; to learn in their native tongue about the political, social, and economic patterns of the host society; and to lessen feelings of isolation and disorientation as they learn to negotiate new environments.
Reflecting the needs of ethnic minorities and immigrants, the ethnic media is one of the few media sectors with general audience growth in the United States (Lieberman, 2006; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). Scholars have recognized ethnic media as a significant factor in maintaining and developing ethnic culture (Deuze, 2006; Fennema, 2004; Johnson, 2010). Studies have repeatedly found that among the many motivations driving ethnic media use, immigrants’ wish to connect to their cultural identity is one of the central drives (Rios & O’Gaines, 1998; Shim & Salmon, 1990; Soruco, 1996; Walker, 1999). Although the language barrier still is an important reason for ethnic media dependency, maintaining a connection to ethnic identity also plays a significant role in explaining the rapid growth of ethnic media. For instance, Abrams and Giles (2007) found that African Americans’ media use could be explained in reference to their search for social-identity gratifications. That is, even members of an ethnic minority group that does not experience a language barrier in terms of accessing mainstream society use ethnic media in an effort to obtain ethnic-identity gratifications. Therefore, we expect ethnic identity and ethnic media use to be positively related to each other. Based on the prior discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: There will be a positive relationship between Korean identity and Korean news use.

The literature also provides a base for the relationship between acculturative stress and host and ethnic media use. Acculturative stress generates emotional uncertainty, confusion, depression, and anxiety (Cordova & Cervantes, 2010; Dawson & Panchanadeswaran, 2010; Kim, 1995), which are closely related to both the extent and pattern of media use (J. C. Conway & Rubin, 1991; Hwang & He, 1999; Kleinke, 1988). This relationship between acculturative stress and media use could be understood as a coping process. Prior research showed that media consumption could function as a strategy for coping with stress (e.g., Lohaus, Ball, Klein-Hessling, & Wild, 2005; Rubin, 1994). Among the many different strategies a person could use to deal with stress, some employ more emotion-focused coping (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Krohne, 1993; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When a person employs this strategy, the main goal is to manage his or her emotional response (Shaw, 1999), and media is one of the important tools associated with this process. For instance, when people are depressed or lonely, they tend to increase their ritualistic media use in order to escape from unpleasant reality or to substitute a sense of mediated companionship for their lack of actual interactions (Finn & Gorr, 1988; Perse & Rubin, 1990). Others who cope with stress using a more problem-focused approach
(e.g., planning, seeking information, taking action) may also be drawn to ethnic media. For instance, ethnic media could provide relevant information to people who are attempting to deal with the sources of their acculturative stress such as discrimination and unfair social treatment.

On the other hand, individuals experiencing negative emotions are inclined to avoid media that remind them of the sources of negative states (Zillmann, 1988, 2000). As discussed, acculturative stress often derives from difficulties with language barriers, cultural adaptation, and perceived discrimination (Ding & Hargraves, 2009; Rogler et al., 1991). In addition to stress arising from the language barrier that those not fluent in the host language are certain to confront in the mainstream media, the mainstream media are less likely to deliver useful information relevant to coping with sources of acculturative stress. Instead, studies have found that the host society’s media constitute a powerful vehicle for negative stereotypes of new immigrants (Keshishian, 2000). In the light of this discussion, it is to be expected that those who experience a high level of acculturative stress avoid mainstream media and opt for ethnic media. Indeed, Ye (2005) found that people who feel a high level of acculturative stress avoid English-language Internet media. Overall, stress from acculturation could motivate people to consume more Korean news media and less of the host country’s (the United States) news media. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: There will be a positive relationship between acculturative stress and Korean news use.
H6: There will be a negative relationship between acculturative stress and U.S. news use.

Ethnic media use could also contribute to ethnic minorities’ civic engagement. Scholars such as Fenemma and Tillie (1999) underscored the necessity of ethnic media for multicultural democracy. They argued that following news about ethnic matters could be crucial to building strong ethnic communities. Ethnic media build a strong community by spreading related information and news, which consolidates the ethnic community within the host society. Supporting Fenemma and Tillie’s thesis, Riggins (1992) showed that ethnic media use could foster ethnic cohesion and civic engagement. In a related argument, Bada (2010) reported that cities with a historically established ethnic media structure have strong partnerships between ethnic media and immigrant advocacy organizations. As a result, ethnic minorities in areas with strong ethnic media tend to become more engaged in civic-minded activities. More recent research in the field of communication also indicates that connecting to geo-ethnic media (defined as media produced for a specific
ethnic group and/or geographic area) could foster ethnic minorities’ sense of belonging to the community and promote their civic engagement (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006; Kim, Jung, & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). Seo (2011) also found that ethnic media use galvanized coethnic civic participation by increasing their knowledge about own ethnic community related issues. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: There will be a positive relationship between Korean news use and coethnic civic engagement.

Research has also confirmed that the mass media, especially the host country’s media, play a significant role in an immigrant’s ability to accumulate knowledge about a host society as well as his or her understanding of mainstream cultural practices (Faragallah, Schumm, & Webb, 1997; Hall, Anten, & Cakim, 1999; Kim, 1995; Subvervi-Velez, 1986; Valenzuela, 1985). Immigrants have social and psychological needs such as learning English, obtaining job information and employment, and becoming familiar with American culture (Vincent & Basil, 1997)—needs that they may try to meet through the mainstream media. This mediated experience helps familiarize immigrants with the host society’s culture and many aspects of the new environment, which is likely to be important to their political socialization. For instance, Trebbe (2007) studied Turks living in Germany and found that German media use (i.e., the mainstream media) is positively associated with Turks’ understanding of German society and culture. In other words, mainstream media use helps immigrants develop a good comprehension of mainstream society, which in turn encourages them to engage civic activities in mainstream society (Chaffee, Nass, & Yang, 1990). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8: There will be a positive relationship between U.S. news use and mainstream civic engagement.

Scholars from traditions of multicultural democracy have argued that the involvement of members of ethnic minority groups in their own ethnic communities is an essential step to all becoming good citizens of mainstream societies. According to this position, the sociopolitical incorporation and empowerment of ethnic minorities can be achieved only when constituencies of those ethnic communities are engaged in civic activities (Diaz, 1996; Fennema & Tillie, 1999). As active members of a strong ethnic community, they will accumulate critical civic experiences and capacities that will eventually benefit mainstream society as well. Fennema and Tillie (1999, 2001) contended that a strong ethnic community becomes a springboard for ethnic
minority groups to extend their participation into the broader community beyond coethnic boundaries. According to Fennema and Tillie, members of ethnic minorities with strong ethnic communities show a higher level of trust in mainstream society than do members of weak ethnic communities. As a result, the former are more active in mainstream society than are the latter. Thus, the last hypothesis is proposed:

H9: There will be a positive relationship between coethnic civic engagement and mainstream civic engagement.

Reflecting the discussions and hypotheses introduced above, the following model was proposed (Figure 1). In addition to specific hypotheses, Figure 1 illustrates the existence of multiple routes from each concept to its final destination in one of the two domains of civic engagement. For instance, there are four different routes whereby acculturative stress is connected to general civic engagement. Three of these show an overall negative relationship between acculturative stress and general civic engagement. However, depending on the route, acculturative stress can also facilitate

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**FIGURE 1** Hypothesized model. (Color figure available online.)
general civic engagement especially when acculturative stress is mediated by ethnic media use.

METHOD

Sample

An online survey was conducted for this study during spring 2008. The survey was designed to examine patterns of civic engagement among Korean immigrants in the United States. The questionnaires were prepared in both English and Korean. Newspaper and radio advertisements were used to recruit participants along with announcements on major Korean newspaper websites. A total of 1,495 adults throughout the United States completed the survey. Of these surveys, this study only includes those completed by participants who were U.S. residents with either legal immigrant status or citizenship. We excluded visa holders with temporary nonimmigrant status and illegal immigrants from our sample. The final sample size comprised 1,135 surveys. About 56.2% (n = 638) of the respondents were U.S. citizens, 42.9% (n = 487) had permanent residency, and 0.9% (n = 10) had permanent residency–equivalent investor visas (EB-5) that would grant permanent residency within a year. The average length of residence in the United States was 16.68 years (SD = 8.49). About 78.5% of the survey respondents in our sample indicated that they were first-generation immigrants, 21.2% were 1.5-generation immigrants, and less than 1% were second-generation immigrants. The average age of the sample was 46 years (SD = 10.20), and 70% of the respondents were men. The median household income range was between $50,000 and $74,999. Half of the respondents were college graduates (48.9%), 15.9% of whom had a 2-year associate college degree. Six surveys evinced a large amount of missing data; therefore, list-wise deletion was

1We advertised our study through a media outlet to recruit study participants. It is certainly possible that there might be some noises associated with this method. But we also argue that this method was one of our very limited ways through which to approach our specific sample and that it is also possible the advertisement was spread by word of mouth, too. Of course, the best way to sample study participants is to utilize the methods such as Random Digit Dialing (RDD). However, we want to suggest that when researchers recruit their ethnic sample through media outlets (because of the budgetary limitations, etc.), they might include a question about how the participants heard about the study, which might clarify some of the unique features of those who participated in the study through direct contact with a media outlet.
used to remove them. Ultimately, 1,129 cases were subjected to final data analysis.  

Exogenous Variables

**Korean identity.** On a 5-point scale, three questions were asked to establish Korean identity: (a) How important is it to keep Korean traditions? (1 = not at all important; 5 = very important), (b) How much commonality do you feel with Koreans? (1 = not at all; 5 = very much), and (c) How strong is your Korean identity? (1 = not at all; 5 = very strong). Based on averaging the answers to these three questions, a composite measure was developed (\(M = 4.06, \ SD = .67, \ \alpha = .67\)).

**Acculturative stress.** Although there is no scholarly consensus regarding how to measure acculturative stress, prior research has documented the list of salient sources of acculturative stress (e.g., Ding & Hargraves, 2009; Rogler et al., 1991). Considering the major sources of acculturative stress, we developed three items to measure acculturative stress. More specifically, on a 5-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), three questions were asked to measure the acculturative stress that Korean immigrants...
might feel; these emphasized (a) stress arising from different social treatment, (b) stress arising from using English, and (c) stress arising from encountering a different culture. Based on averaging the answers to these three questions, a composite measure of acculturative stress was developed ($M = 3.15$, $SD = .77$, $x = .71$).

Endogenous Variables

Korean news use and U.S. news use. On a 5-point scale from 1 (never) to 5 (all the time), Korean news media use ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.06$) was measured by asking how often respondents used Korean news media. U.S. news use was also measured on a 5-point scale asking how often respondents used U.S. news ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.00$).

Coethnic civic engagement. Questions about volunteering and donating experience have been used to measure civic engagements in much prior research (e.g., Brady et al., 1994; Jennings & Zeitner, 2003; Putnam, 2000; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). An index of coethnic civic engagement was developed by counting the number of Korean-related organizations to which respondents donated money or for which they acted as volunteers during the previous year. More specifically, first, the respondents were asked whether they had donated money to each of three kinds of Korean-related organizations in the United States: (a) Korean churches or religious organizations, (b) Korean-related nonprofit organizations such as the local Korean American Association and the Korean-American Foundation, and (c) Korean American–related political organizations. Second, for each of these groups, the respondents were asked whether they had performed any volunteer work. Each time the respondents answered “yes” (e.g., “yes” to volunteering for the Korean Church or another religious group, or “yes” to donating money to a Korean-related political organization), their answers were coded as 1. “No” answers were coded as 0. A composite measure of coethnic civic engagement was developed by adding “yes” answers ($M = 1.70$, $SD = .90$).

General civic engagement. General civic engagement was measured in the same way as coethnic civic engagement for the Korean community, that is, by counting how many mainstream society organizations respondents had volunteered for and how many they had donated money to. The only difference was found in the list of organizations we provided to the participants. For the general civic engagement measures, we also provided three organizations (a) nonprofit organizations serving the mainstream community such as the YMCA, the Goodwill, and the Red Cross; (b) local churches or religious
organizations; and (3) U.S. political organizations. This same list of organizations was given for volunteering experience and donation experience. Based on the addition of the number of mainstream organizations for which the participants had volunteered or to which they had donated, a composite measure of general civic engagement was developed ($M = .74$, $SD = .98$).

RESULTS

Overall Model

Path analyses were performed to examine the overall fit of the hypothesized model. AMOS 18 was used for analysis with maximum likelihood estimation. This study examines the relationships among ethnic identity, acculturative stress, news media uses, and civic engagement beyond the traditional SES framework. To control for age, gender, education, household income, years living in the United States, and immigration generation, residual values of all key variables were obtained through regressing them with the six control variables. These residuals of focal variables, therefore, explained Korean identity. Age ($b = .013$, $p < .01$) and education ($b = -.124$, $p < .001$) were two significant factors in accounting for Korean news use. More specifically, the older and less educated consumed more Korean news than the younger and more educated Koreans did. Gender, household income, and immigrant generation were not associated with Korean news use. On the other hand, household income ($b = .075$, $p < .001$), education ($b = .098$, $p < .01$), years spent living in the United States ($b = .032$, $p < .001$) and generation ($b = .174$, $p < .05$) explained their U.S. media use. In terms of general civic engagement, gender and household income, education, and years spent living in the United States turned out to be significant factors in explaining general civic engagement. Those who earn more ($b = .060$, $p < .01$), are better educated ($b = .151$, $p < .01$) and have lived in the United States for a longer period ($b = .013$, $p < .01$) tended to be more actively engaged in mainstream society. On the other hand, age ($b = .011$, $p < .01$) and income ($b = .037$, $p < .05$) meaningfully explain their engagement in their own ethnic community, none of the other control variables (gender, education, years spent living in the United States, and immigration generation) turned out to be significant.
are not explained by the seven covariates. Zero-order correlations among the focal variables are presented in Table 1. The hypothesized path model using residuals of the focal variables showed a good fit with the data using commonly employed criteria (Hu & Bentler, 1999): \( \chi^2(5) = 3.92, p = .56 \), incremental fit index = 1.01, comparative fit index = 1.00, standardized root mean square residual = .01.

### Hypotheses Tests

In Figure 2, the specific path coefficients of the hypothesized model are presented. H1 stated that those with a strong Korean identity would be more active members of Korean communities than would those without such a strong identity. As shown in Figure 2, this hypothesis was supported \((\beta = .086, p < .01)\). Both H2 and H3 predicted negative relationships between acculturative stress and the two types of civic engagement. More specifically, H2 expected that people who feel a high level of acculturative stress withdraw from mainstream civic engagement, and this was supported \((\beta = - .072, p < .05)\). In contrast, there was no significant relationship between acculturative stress and coethnic civic engagement. Feeling acculturative stress neither enhance nor impair civic involvement with the ethnic community. Therefore, H3 failed to reject the null hypothesis \((\beta = .006, \text{ns})\).

H4 expected a positive relationship between Korean identity and Korean news use. Consistent with the literature, H4 was supported \((\beta = .223, p < .001)\). H5 and H6 predicted the relationships between acculturative stress and two types of news media use. As shown in Figure 2, both hypotheses

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Korean ID</th>
<th>Acculstress</th>
<th>Korean news</th>
<th>U.S. news</th>
<th>Coethnic eng</th>
<th>General eng</th>
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<td>Korean ID</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculstress</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korean news</td>
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<td>-.18**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>U.S. news</td>
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<td>-.11**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General eng</td>
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<td>-.05</td>
<td>.07*</td>
<td>-.05*</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** \(N = 1,129\). Korean ID = Korean identity; Korean news = Korean news use; U.S. news = U.S. news use; Acculstress = acculturative stress; Coethnic eng = coethnic civic engagement; General eng = general civic engagement.

\* \(p < .10\). \* \(p < .05\). ** \(p < .01\). *** \(p < .001\).
were supported: People who feel acculturative stress tend to consume more Korean news media ($\beta = .143, p < .001$) and less U.S. news media ($\beta = -.111, p < .001$). H7 stated that Korean news media use would be positively associated with coethnic civic engagement. This hypothesis failed to reject the null hypothesis ($\beta = .002, ns$). We also expected to find a positive association between U.S. news use and mainstream civic engagement (H8), and this was supported ($\beta = .069, p < .05$). Finally, H9 predicted that members of Korean communities who engaged in civic activities for their own ethnic communities would be more likely to engage in civic activities for mainstream society than would those who did not so engage for their ethnic community. As shown in Figure 2, the data did not support this hypothesis ($\beta = -.053, p = .07$). More specifically, the relationship between coethnic civic engagement and mainstream civic engagement turned out to be the opposite of what we had expected. Although it did not reach the conventional level of significance, active coethnic civic engagement was negatively associated with mainstream civic engagement.\(^4\)

\(^4\)As reported previously, three paths in hypothesized model emerged as significant. These nonsignificant paths were dropped to improve model fit and parsimony. This parsimonious model produced good fit statistics: $\chi^2(8) = 7.218, p = .51$, incremental fit index = 1.01, comparative fit index = 1.00, standardized root mean square residual = .00. A chi-square difference test did show a statistically significant difference between the two nested models ($\Delta \chi^2 = 3.298, \Delta df = 3, p > .05$). Hence, the revised parsimonious model was favored over the hypothesized model.
Additional Analysis

Given the general importance of immigration-related variables to understanding immigrants’ behaviors in general, we considered whether our theoretical model varied depending on either immigration generation or by time spent living in the United States. Multigroup analysis using immigration generation variable reflected insignificant differences between the constrained and unconstrained models, $\Delta\chi^2(9) = 2.594$, $p = .978$, implying that our theoretical model did not vary across two generation subsamples (i.e., the first generation of immigrants group and the other-generations group). On the other hand, the years spent living in the United States variable showed somewhat different results. Our model did vary across two groups in this regard (i.e., relative newcomers and longer residents in the United States), $\Delta\chi^2(9) = 30.115$, $p < .001$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>Path Coefficient Comparisons: Relative Newcomers versus Those With Longer Residence in the United States</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean identity $\rightarrow$ Coethnic engagement (H1)</td>
<td>.086**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative stress $\rightarrow$ General engagement (H2)</td>
<td>$-.072^*$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative stress $\rightarrow$ Coethnic engagement (H3)</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean identity $\rightarrow$ Korean news use (H4)</td>
<td>.223***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative stress $\rightarrow$ Korean news use (H5)</td>
<td>.143***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturative stress $\rightarrow$ U.S. news use (H6)</td>
<td>$-.111^*$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean news use $\rightarrow$ Coethnic engagement (H7)</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. news use $\rightarrow$ General engagement (H8)</td>
<td>.069*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coethnic engagement $\rightarrow$ General engagement (H9)</td>
<td>$-.053^#$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Relative newcomers in the United States and longer term residents in the United States were divided by median-split ($Mdn = 15$ year). Longer residents represent those who have lived in the United States for more than 15 years. Entries are standardized path coefficients. Bold text represents statistically significant differences (at $p < .05$ level) between parameters (between two subgroups).

$^\#$ $p < .10$. $^\ast p < .05$. $^{**} p < .01$. $^{***} p < .001$. 
As indicated in Table 2, the results showed statistically significant differences for the five parameters across the two groups. First, in terms of H3, when relative newcomers to the United States feel acculturative stress, it indeed hurts their engagement in their own ethnic community ($\beta = .102$, $p < .05$). However, for those who had lived in the United States for a longer period (15+ years), acculturative stress and coethnic civic engagement were not related ($\beta = -.069$, ns). More important, the path between coethnic civic engagement and general civic engagement (H9) showed a significant variation between two subgroups. Opposite from the hypothesized relationship, coethnic civic engagement and general civic engagement were negatively associated for relative newcomers ($\beta = -.132$, $p < .01$). However, this negative relationship between the two domains of civic engagement disappeared for those who had lived in the host society for a long period ($\beta = .007$, ns).

**DISCUSSION**

An active citizenry has long been recognized as a cornerstone of democracy, and scholars have proposed and tested various theoretical models in an effort to account for civic engagement. The most basic approach to understanding “who participates” considers only the resources at a person’s disposal. Although the general importance of SES for explaining social engagement is still clear, one of the contributions of this study is its focus on explaining factors relevant to the active citizenry of immigrant populations beyond the traditional SES-based framework. In particular, this study focuses on how factors relevant to the life experiences of immigrants explain their civic lives: the roles of ethnic identity, acculturative stress, and news media use (mainstream as well as ethnic media).

We expected that strong ethnic identity would produce active members of an ethnic community. And, as expected, ethnic identity facilitated coethnic civic engagement, that is, civic engagement for the ethnic community. In contrast, acculturative stress harmed civic engagement on behalf of the ethnic community and on behalf of mainstream society. Both ethnic identity and acculturative stress influence immigrants’ media use, which in turn influences civic engagement. Mainstream news media played a positive role in boosting civic engagement for mainstream society. On the other hand, ethnic media neither helped nor hurt the immigrants’ civic engagement, which was not in line with our expectation. This finding can be explained in reference to recent studies, according to which ethnic media tend to concentrate on news about the home country rather than on U.S.-relevant news (Lin & Song, 2006; Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). Especially in the case of the Korean ethnic media, many media outlets have mother companies back
in Korea, from which they draw a large portion of their news. As a result, their news could be skewed toward the country of origin rather than focusing on the Korean community in the United States. This null finding, in sum, suggests that depending on what kinds of contents they deliver to the ethnic community they are supposed to serve, the role of ethnic media could render a very different effect, suggesting the importance of content analyses of ethnic media in the future research.

Finally, this study examined the relationship between a specific ethnic group’s civic engagement and its civic engagement in mainstream society. Although recent discussion about multicultural democracy revolves around the relationship between ethnic minorities’ participation in a mainstream civic community and an ethnic civic community, empirical tests of the relationship between these two domains of civic engagement are rare. We expected that coethnic civic engagement would be positively associated with civic engagement for mainstream society. This expectation, however, was not supported. Moreover, if a slightly more liberal standard of statistical significance is applied, it could be argued that this study found a negative relationship between coethnic civic engagement and general civic engagement. Although not in accord with our expectations, this opposite finding has been reported in other studies (e.g., Brenton et al., 2004; Huckfeldt, 1986; Uslander & Conley, 2003). Scholars from diverse disciplines have warned that the social and communicative insularity of ethnic communities could harm democratic societies. For instance, Uslander and Conley (2003) studied Chinese ethnic groups living in California and found that their strong attachment to their Chinese communities interferes with their ability to connect to mainstream U.S. society. Introducing the term “particularized trusters,” Uslander and Conley showed that members of Chinese communities by living among themselves developed trust in and engagement with Chinese communities in the US, but they failed to do the same beyond the coethnic boundary. Uslander and Conley found that strong attachment to an ethnic community indeed hurt their involvement in mainstream society. They explained that patriarchal family culture emphasizes the importance of blood relatives and kinship groups such that outsiders of ethnic communities tend to be excluded. Likewise, Korean culture is based on solid patriarchal values and emphasizes loyalty to immediate in-group members. Because of its location, Korea has a history of defending itself against invaders. Patriarchal culture combined with the defensiveness that characterizes the country’s history could explain why coethnic civic engagement did not facilitate mainstream civic engagement among Korean immigrants in the present study.

As previously discussed, advocates of multicultural democracy have argued that in a society composed of culturally and ethnically heterogeneous constituents, democracy functions when both mainstream civic community
and group-identity-based civic communities flourish. This multicultural
democracy thesis suggests that two domains of civic engagement should
be strongly interconnected. The finding of this study, therefore, raises not
only theoretical questions but also practical challenges to a democracy
grounded on cultural and ethnic differences. Given the significance of this
question, we probed further on this relationship.

More specifically, our additional analysis considered how long immi-
grants have lived in the United States and found a negative relationship
between coethnic civic engagement and general engagement among relative
newcomers. However this negative relationship completely disappeared for
those who had settled down in the United States for a long period. This
absence of the negative connection found in longtime residents in the United
States by no means supports the claims of multicultural democracy. Instead,
it suggests that especially in consideration of the relatively short immigration
history of Koreans, it might be too hasty to conclude that coethnic civic
engagement does not boost civic engagement in mainstream society for this
population. For instance, Fennemma and Tillie (2001) emphasized the
importance of interlocking directorates, whose memberships belong to both
ethnic and mainstream community, in making connections between ethnic
communities and the host society. The existence of interlocking directorates
could create permanent communication channels between coethnic and
mainstream organizations. Developing interlocking directorates, however,
may require time. Although it is still highly speculative, Korean ethnic com-

munities in the United States may not be developed enough. Once developed,
leadership, efficacy, ideas, perspectives, and problem-solving capacities
nurtured in the Korean community may start to engender a sense of dual
citizenship, such that members participate in the Korean ethnic community
and in mainstream U.S. society as well.

In the interest of future research, it is also important to recognize the lim-
itations of this study. Perhaps the most significant limitation is our use of a
convenience sample. The drawback of the convenience sample is clear that
it greatly constrains our ability to generalize from the findings. Using the
representative sample and/or longitudinal data would advance our under-
estanding of how the two domains of civic engagement we found in this study
are related to each other. In addition, we also want to clarify that 0.9%
($n = 10$) of our sample were not permanent residents or U.S. citizens, which
limits their opportunity to donate money to political organizations or polit-
cical candidates. Considering the prior research suggesting the negative
relationship between entertainment media and civic engagement (e.g., Shah,
1998), content other than news, especially entertainment media content,
should also be taken into consideration in future research. At the same time,
it might be important to examine whether various types of media (e.g., TV,
newspaper, social media) could influence civic engagement in distinct ways. Future research should compare immigrant populations with different ethnic origins with more direct measures of political culture in order to examine whether the theoretical arguments advanced in this study can be applied to other immigrant communities.

REFERENCES


