KOREAN AMERICANS

Kyeyoung Park

In New York City in the late 1980s, a progressive group in the Korean American community organized a Korean cultural program in the Asian village at the famous Queens Festival.[1] This mammoth festival attracts as many as 300,000 visitors on a weekend. After the festival was over, controversy arose over the Korean cultural exhibit. Did it fairly represent Korean culture? Some people were indignant about the exhibit. They chided the organizers and said that the strong political messages—evident in posters, paintings, woodblock printings, and wall hangings—had little to do with the elegance of Korean culture. For them, the artwork depicting Korean workers demanding higher wages and democracy was a disgrace for Koreans in the United States. They questioned why exhibit organizers ignored the other aspects of Korean culture. They also declared that performance of farmers' dances and other folk dances misrepresented Koreans.

The lingering questions of this controversy have to do with the presentation and representation of Korean homeland culture in the context of a festival in the United States. In other words, what is really "Korean" in the Korean transnational community, and why does this matter provoke such heated arguments among Korean Americans?

As Koreans leave Korea and settle in other nations, the name *Korea* becomes enigmatic, much different than in the homeland. In Korea, when people marry, they tend to verify their identity through references to region, birthplace, family background, educational level, and other factors.[2] In contrast, in the United States, the reference point for Koreans becomes ethnicity. It is not uncommon to hear conversations between immigrants about whether their daughter is marrying another Korean or not.

In addition to the problems of retaining the particularities of Korean culture and ethnicity, there is a problem of measurement. A Korean immigrant is often

asked, How Korean are you? People raise this question as if one could measure the degree of Koreanization or Americanization.[3] But more important are the implications of this question: what do people mean when they identify a person as not being Korean enough or being too Korean?

This article examines the construction of culture in diaspora communities; in particular, what happens to Korean culture and identity among Korean immigrants living in the United States, and how Koreanness is re-created and reinterpreted in the Korean American community.[4] It analyzes Korean immigrant discourse on culture and argues that the making of Korean American culture is a creative and critical process drawing from Korean, American, and other cultures. Specifically, it argues that Korean American culture is rooted in Korea, but that its parameters are set by the political economy of the United States (i.e., by the impact the U.S. economy has on the restructuring of the immigrant community).

The data comes from ethnographic fieldwork done in the late 1980s on the Korean immigrant community in New York City, where some 200,000 ethnic Koreans reside.[5] In Queens, New York City, the county population in 1987 was 49 percent white, 21 percent black, 16 percent Hispanic, and 14 percent Asian. In New York City, which has the second-largest Korean community in America, over two-thirds of the Koreans work in small businesses as either employers or employees. As a Korean-born woman and an anthropologist, I will also add my own perspective as a new-immigrant researcher to this discussion.[6]

TRANSNATIONAL DIASPORA AND THE QUESTION OF AGENCY

An increasing number of new approaches to studying immigrants and their communities are shifting their focus from international migration to an examination of transnational diaspora. In their book on Chinese diaspora, Nonini and Ong viewed diaspora: as a pattern of communities, persons, and groups, separated by space but sharing a common condition; a community that is continually reconstituted by the travel of Chinese persons across and throughout the regions of dispersion; and a community characterized by multiple and varied connections via family ties, kinship, commerce, sentiments, and values related to the "homeland," shared memberships in transnational organizations, and so forth.[7]

In addition, as presented in new journals such as *Diaspora*, *Public Culture*, and *Identities*, writers and researchers no longer interpret the contemporary global movement and flow of people, information, and commodities within the outmoded framework of unidirectional assimilation.[8] Instead, they write about migration that is transnational rather than international, that is circular rather than just one-way, and that follows multifarious trajectories and diverse networks.

This approach also reflects a new understanding of nation-states as borderlands of shifting and contested boundaries and presents migrant networks and communities in this context. These developments occur within the context of late capitalism, or what David Harvey called the condition of postmodernity. A constellation of technical, financial, and institutional innovations that have occurred

since the early 1970s has led to a shift in capitalism from mass industrial production to globalized regimes of "flexible accumulation."[9] According to Harvey, "Flexible accumulation rests on flexibility with respect to labor processes, labor markets, products, and patterns of consumption. It is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation."[10]

Fundamentally, these changes are associated with the enhanced and increased mobility of people, commodities, ideas, and capital on a global scale, and one of the major consequences is the migration of people. For example, Asian countries are producing more highly trained members than they can absorb, while the United States produces fewer than it needs. These imbalances are a product of the contradictions of capitalism, the resulting class struggles, and efforts to restructure the global economy.[11] Since the late 1970s, large numbers of, mainly middle-class professional Koreans have come to the United States. Their departure from Korea and their entrance into the United States reflect the late-capitalist relationship between the United States and Korea.

Korean immigrant culture has been shaped by the diaspora experience. It is transnational and deterritorialized. Following Nina Glick-Schiller and George Fournon's (1989) model in their study of Haitians, the Korean diaspora experience can be analyzed in terms of multiple and overlapping identities. For Korean immigrants, these separate identities allow them to both accommodate and resist the realities of race, class, and gender both in Korea and the United States.[12] Korean American culture, thus, is very fluid, and similar to what some scholars have described as creole cultures. According to Ulf Hannerz, creole cultures "are intrinsically of mixed origin, the confluence of two or more widely separate historical currents which interact in what is basically a center/periphery relationships."[13] Perhaps the best American example of a creole culture is found in New Orleans, where Europeans, Americans, Indians, and Africans have intermingled. Can Korean Americans be one of the many new creoles in New York?

Hannerz's creolization concept helps in an analysis of the creation of Korean immigrant culture. However, the concept lacks important historical and political dimensions such as time, place, and context. Also, although the government plays a major role in resocializing or acculturating ethnic immigrants, people are not passive but rather dynamically engaged in the process of developing their own particular identity and culture, and the definition does not adequately acknowledge this.

In her much-celebrated study of Asian American diasporas, Anthropologist Lisa Lowe argues that interpreting Asian American culture exclusively in terms of conflict between generations and filial relationships oversimplifies that culture, obscuring the particularities and differences created by class, gender, and nationality among Asians. Instead, basing on her study of Asian American customs and practices, she suggests, "The making of Asian American culture may be a much 'messier' process than unmediated vertical transmission from one gen-

eration to another, including practices that are partly inherited and partly modified, as well as partly invented."[14]

Similarly, Andrew Apter explains cultural construction as a dynamic process, as evidenced by his study of religious practices such as Haitian voodoo, Brazilian Candomble and Cuban Santeria. In his deconstruction of Linguist Melville Herskovits's much-celebrated essentialized syncretic paradigm on the repossession of Africa's heritage in the New World, Apter states, "The relation between implicit social knowledge and political economy . . . defines the horizon of Africanity in the New World: not as core values or cultural templates but as dynamic and critical practices."[15]

Nonetheless, Eric Gable, Richard Handler, and Anna Lawson insightfully note that ongoing construction of culture can be politically damaging to underrepresented (or misrepresented) peoples who are in the process of claiming their collective rights. More significantly, lost in the deconstructive orgy is the more crucial point that majority or mainstream traditions are equally invented.[16]

This article examines the construction of culture in diasporic communities, emphasizing the creative and critical practices relating to the idea of agency. How do transnational people maintain their identities, and what strategies do they adopt? In the creation of a hybrid culture, what efforts are made to retain original characteristics and customs?

Part of the transnational experience is "the prices people pay and are forced to pay by all of this, the blood on the floor and immense suffering and anguish and ambiguity."[17] Amid this context of "anguish and ambiguity" lies Korean American culture in multiethnic America.

KOREAN AMERICAN CULTURE

A researcher who studied cultural differences and communication styles between Korean merchants and employees and black patrons in south Los Angeles listed the following values and characteristics of Korean immigrants, based on her observations. "Respect of hierarchy; racial pride; reverence for lineage-loyalty, honor and duty; introspection and self-control; age orientation; emphasis on collective responsibility; formalism in behavior and logic of the heart; circular (indirect) ways of thinking; avoidance of confrontation; and high regard for education.[18]

In addition, she stated that Asian tradition assumes that all humans are created unequal.[19] Although some of these characteristics may be true, the concept of culture is broader than a list of values and traits.

Other scholars have approached the concept of culture through acculturation studies. In Los Angeles, Won Mao Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim studied patterns of Korean immigrants' acculturation by measuring the following variables: English proficiency, exposure to American printed mass media, and Anglicization of Korean names (first names). "In sharp contrast to the findings on acculturation, most of the dimensions of ethnic attachment are not related to the

length of residence in the United States. . . . [R]egardless of the length of residence, a high proportion of our respondents subscribe to Korean newspapers, prefer to associate with Koreans, and prefer to attend the Korean ethnic church."[20]

One problem with these acculturation studies is that "they often involved a rather weak sense of the political economy of culture, of the overwhelming power of the Western expansion and of the material bases of change."[21] In addition, in the studies already discussed, we do not know what each Korean thought of the survey. Here, the measure of Korean culture is limited to the variables of language, names, and media. One of the most important keys to understanding Korean immigrants is the notion of *anjong* (establishment, stability, or security) related to small business ventures.[22] As used by immigrants, anjong refers to a definition of success that is different from becoming rich or attaining status as a member of high society. Anjong was developed by Korean immigrants to make sense of the American ideology of opportunity. Included in the concept are the immigrant community's analysis of causes and consequences of social relations and prescriptions to take advantage of opportunities. Korean immigrants see establishment of their own small business as a shortcut to the American Dream. In striving for this ideal, they remind themselves of the proverb "One will be rewarded as hard as one works."

In their pursuit of anjong, they alter traditional gender and kinship relations, as seen in the rise of a women-centered and sister-initiated kinship structure in Korean American small business. Also as a result of their focus on anjong, Korean immigrants have developed a new understanding of class, ethnicity, and race, as well as new religious ideas and practices. Anjong, therefore, plays a central role in the lives and foundational thinking of first-generation Korean Americans.

This description reveals certain aspects of Korean culture that have been reconfigured in the formation of a Korean American community. However, unless these concepts are related to how members of that community perceive their culture, how cultural reproduction occurs, and what aspects of the culture remain intact will not be clear. Is Korean immigrant culture, broadly speaking, Korean, or is it American culture? For the most part, immigrants tend to identify American culture with lifestyles of the white American middle class. However, they are also familiar with other ethnic cultures in America. For instance, given the importance of small-business activities, many Korean immigrant men in New York are familiar with Latino and other cultures, through bars and restaurants. Nonetheless, for Korean immigrants, there seems to be a gap between their perception of America and their multiethnic experience. As a result, in their testimonies, they do not yet seem to recognize American multiethnic culture.

Professors Kim and Hurh suggest that an adhesive mode of adaptation—meaning that the immigrant group remains tightly knit—allows Korean Americans to incorporate elements of American culture and social relations into their indigenous culture, *without replacing or modifying any significant part of that culture.*[23] However, even if one imagines that culture is a static unit or entity that is ab-

sorbed whole, it is not easy to add elements of American culture, while keeping Korean culture intact.

At the same time, one should avoid oversimplifying Korean or American culture. The process of acculturation/assimilation doesn't necessarily mean a linear evolutionary process from the immigrant culture to host culture. Moreover, Korean and U.S. culture have been interlocked since the Korean War; Koreans are exposed to the hegemonic U.S. culture long before they immigrate. Another related problem is defining what immigrants mean by "America." "American" culture is composed of so many cultural elements that there is no one, true American culture.

According to the interviewees, the making of Korean American culture is a gradual process, but more importantly, it is a moral and political process. Koreans often comment on the gradual process of Americanization when they refer to their eating habits.[24] For instance, an immigrant who enjoys a sour grapefruit is said to be more Americanized than an immigrant who prefers the Korean taste of a sweet mandarin orange. Similarly, an immigrant who drinks coffee black is more Americanized than an immigrant who drinks coffee with milk and sugar. In these cases, the process of Americanization is thought to be accompanied by rejection and denial as well as lack of familiarity. On the other hand, an immigrant who is said to be "smelling butter" is thought to be Americanized with the added connotation of having forgotten his Korean culture.

Thus, the making of Korean American culture in the United States turns out to be a complex, selective, contradictory, and ambiguous process, encompassing a broad spectrum of change. There is great deal of heterogeneity in the way each Korean American performs, practices, or interprets Korean and American culture. Often it is said that men do not change greatly from the way they behaved in Korea, whereas women change a lot in America. Also, it is often said that Americanization in the Korean immigrant family occurs most quickly in children. So, the younger generation and women tend to Americanize much faster than the older generation and men, which may create tension in the family. Perhaps educational level—particularly U.S. education—occupational category, and length of residence in the United States make a further difference. However, the way Koreans are Americanized is not limited to these factors.

There are three important angles from which to study the cultural production and reproduction of Korean American culture. The first angle is generation change: from immigrant parents to children, from an immigrant community to ethnic Americans. The second angle, which is the major focus of this article, is the way immigrants in their daily lives tear apart Korean culture and reconstruct it. In other words, they constantly use Korean culture as their cultural reference for digesting American culture. The third angle is identifying contradiction, confusion, and struggle. As immigrants understand implications of American culture, they develop a fear for their culture's future. As a consequence, they constantly draw from both American and Korean culture as a way of producing the third alternative, Korean immigrant culture. The only way to overcome this

contradiction is to create this new alternative: redefining Korean as well as American culture.

With these approaches in mind and based on the interviewees' responses during fieldwork that was conducted, there are four main types of value judgments made by immigrants about Korean American culture. These value judgments occur over a wide spectrum of daily life, in matters of aesthetics; problems of virtue/morals/ethics/righteousness; concepts of time and space; language and speech patterns; behaviors and mannerisms; work relations; social and human relations; gender relations and sexuality; experiences with government agencies such as schools, police, and courts; patterns of consumption, leisure, and customs; and so forth. As they redefine their culture, or it is redefined, Korean immigrants employ their moral framework as a strategy for making sense of aspects of both cultures.[25] For Korean immigrants, what does not fit into existing rules or stereotypes is described as wrong, bad, dirty, or dangerous. For some Korean immigrant men, the phrase "Americanized Korean women" implies loose sexual morality.

Korean immigrants often refer to "drinking different water," when they change their residence. Accordingly, they view their new life in the United States as "drinking American water" (*mikukmulul masida*). However, they also distinguish between good or foul water. If one develops the reputation of "drinking foul water," it implies that one is not properly Americanized. Immigrants focus on the negative aspects of U.S. culture when they speak of those who are "thinly Americanized," compared with "truly deeply Americanized." Similarly, when they call someone a "true Korean," compared with someone who is "thinly Koreanized," they refer to the negative aspects of Korean culture.

Furthermore, many Korean immigrants talk about the "grafting" (*chobmok*) of Korean American culture. A Korean immigrant woman, an art therapist, wrote:

> In my hometown, there were many fruit trees, particularly persimmon trees, "kam namu." Early morning on summer days, I used to gather all the fallen persimmon flowers and wear it as a necklace. Later I used to eat one after another. A persimmon tree is not originally a persimmon tree. First, one should find a young koyom namu (a kind of persimmon tree, but considered inferior in quality to a true persimmon tree). Three years later, often in early spring, one cuts the stem of the young tree and grafts it to the real persimmon tree. I found the whole process to be poetic and mysterious, and it used to appear often in my drawings. Our immigrant life is exactly this process of grafting, chobmok.[26]

Korean immigrants see a persimmon tree and koyom tree as equivalent to Korean and American cultures, respectively, which through grafting can ultimately produce delicious persimmons. The underlying message is that one has to be careful to select good trees in order to complete the grafting process. In the grafting process, some immigrants add negative aspects of American culture to negative aspects of Korean culture. Others adopt negative aspects of American culture but keep positive aspects of Korean culture. Still others adopt positive aspects of Amer-

Figure 1
Four Types of Responses to the Formation of Korean American Culture

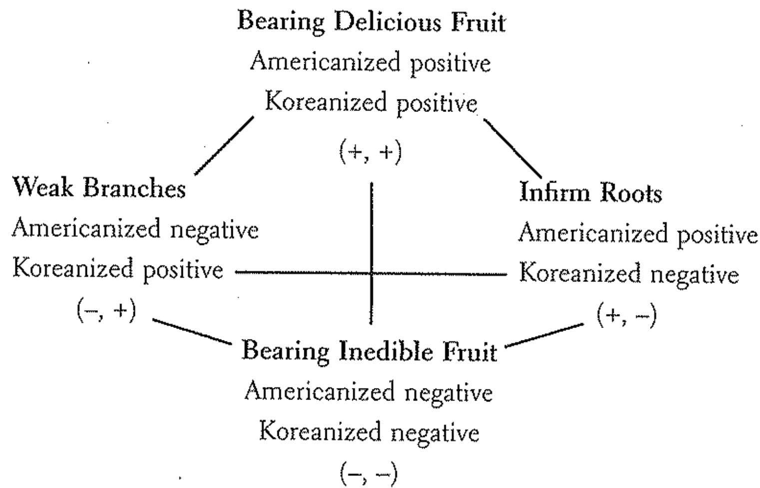
Maturity	Types
High	4 (ideal cosmopolitan)
Medium High	3 (confused or contradictory)
Medium Low	2 (confused or contradictory)
Low	1 (marginalized)

ican culture but lose positive attributes of Korean culture, and some adopt positive aspects of American culture and also keep positive aspects of Korean culture. Here, this moralistic and aesthetic way of understanding change can also include dimensions of either affirming or negating or adding to or forgetting each culture. As seen in Figure 1, the last type, type 4, can be called the cosmopolitan outlook, while the first category, type 1, refers to the estrangers, marginal people. *Cosmopolitanism* means a willingness to put the future of every culture at risk through the critical, sympathetic scrutiny of other cultures and the willingness to contemplate the creation of new affiliations.[27] These typologies describe the efforts of Korean immigrants to create a third culture that is neither Korean nor American. This emphasis is similar to the analysis of Ling-chi Wang, who looked at the two dominant concepts in the study of the Chinese diaspora: in the Western world, that of assimilation, or Anglo-conformity, and in China, the notion of loyalty.[28] Similarly, some Korean immigrants hope to liberate themselves from pressures of either conforming to U.S. society or remaining faithful to Korea. Others might come to the realization that being American does not disqualify one from being Korean. In selecting and reinterpreting certain aspects of Korean and/or American culture, immigrants do not define their lives according to clear lines of demarcation. Instead, these aspects combine to form an integrated whole.

By measuring the frequency of positive and negative attributes of Korean and American culture and continuing to consider cultural change in terms of grafting, we come up with a four-way classification (see Figure 2). These categories stem from Korean immigrants' efforts to make sense of their host American culture through references to their prior Korean experience. Like the Hegelian system of dialectics, they identify a thesis (Korean culture); an antithesis (American culture); and the synthesis (Korean American culture). However, this process does not occur smoothly. Immigrants are often torn apart by conflicting cultural repertoires. In addition, they often find these cultures contradictory.

It is important to note that most immigrants remain at the intermediate levels, halfway, *yolch'igi*: Americanized positive and Koreanized negative; or Americanized negative and Koreanized positive.[29] Although there are different levels of maturity, the developmental process is a continuum, evolving over time. More importantly, it is fluid, moving in different directions at different times.[30] It might

Figure 2
Four-Way Classification of the Formation of Korean American Culture and "Grafting"



be expected that all immigrants move toward Americanization, but that is contingent on political and economic factors relating to the status of Koreans in American society.

For Koreans, becoming American has a special meaning that goes beyond holding U.S. citizenship. Many speak about their dream of material success in the idiom of Americanization. They see this as a process of joining the best parts of Korean culture with the best parts of American culture. The person who is "truly deeply Americanized" belongs to the highest stage of development. These idealized individuals have moved beyond the individualistic and selfish attitudes that many see in thinly Americanized immigrants. Immigrants' criticisms of fellow Koreans' behavior, and their contradictory views about positive and negative aspects of American behavior lead to an interesting social commentary about life in America.

BEARING INEDIBLE FRUIT

At worst, an immigrant loses, denies, or forgets the good aspects of Korean culture and adopts the bad aspects of American culture. For example, there are Koreans who are not able to speak either English or Korean fluently. Mrs. Kwon, who runs a Korean dress shop, sees this trend, particularly in young people. "Young ladies smoke and young guys have long hair and assume loose attitudes, adopting the American way. I wish that these were not identified as traits in Koreans by other ethnic groups. I want Koreans to keep their own culture."[31] It remains a major concern of many Koreans to retain their cultural tradition, including language and proper behavior between generations. Some immigrants

fear that if they adopt some aspects of American culture, they will lose Korean culture in the process.

WEAK BRANCHES, "YAKHAN KAJI"

At the intermediate level of Americanization, Mr. Chun, a fish-market owner, explains how some Koreans tend to adopt only bad, egotistical, individualistic, and materialistic aspects of American culture.

> Some Koreans tend to be Americanized too soon. They pretend to be American as soon as they arrive in America adopting an arrogant attitude. Without considering any obligations to other Koreans, once they make some money, they try to isolate themselves by living in the suburbs. They do not think of the well-being of the second- or third-generation Koreans. That's why, despite my ten-year residence in America, I am reluctant to be Americanized.

Here, Mr. Chun suggests that even Americanized Koreans should be concerned about the future of the Korean American community. Similarly, Mr. Kim recognizes other Koreans' thin Americanization as he struggles to select only good aspects of the American culture for himself:

> As Koreans live longer in America, they also become individualistic. If someone is robbed, now Korean onlookers, like Americans, neither call the police nor help the person. While I was shopping yesterday, I thought about the serious competition among Koreans. This is sad; there were too many green groceries all on the same block. In my analysis, Koreans seem to become inhumane. As they live in a difficult situation, they learn to satisfy only their own accumulated wants.[32]

It should be noted that individualism, materialism, and competition have been deemed American traits. But the more that immigrants pursue their dream of owning small businesses, the more likely it is that they become materialistic, competitive, and individualistic—traits that conflict with their ideal of true Americanization.

Meanwhile, other immigrants strive to retain some positive elements from Korean culture. In the following statement, Mr. Pai, a Yellow Cab driver, critiques American society: "What is negative about American society is the dependence on government. Whereas Americans seem to be content with their lives, Koreans always try to have a better life, focusing on savings. In that sense, I want to keep working hard. I plan to run a grocery in two or three years."[33]

His statement reflects Koreans' unfamiliarity with the welfare state. South Korea has no such concept. Similarly, Ms. Hong, a twenty-three-year-old, college student wrote:

> I am proud of my three siblings. I am not saying that I have no conflict at all with them. Since I left Korea for Brazil at the age of eight, my younger sisters

> remember little about Korea. In addition, they made many friends with Americans, mikuk saramdul,[34] so they became more Americanized. Therefore, I often try to talk to them after seeing movies together. "We are forever Koreans. Tradition or customs might change but never disappear. To remember and respect our hard work and the suffering of our parents, we need to be careful. Don't ever forget Korean etiquette and manners. Do you understand?" Then, my 16 and 19 year old sisters say, "Older sister, we are aware. Don't worry."[35]

To Ms. Choi, who works at a coffee shop, Americanization is just a term, not a reality. She points to racial and ethnic discrimination against Korean Americans and to the American concepts of no privacy and private property as major stumbling blocks to Koreans' Americanization.

> No matter how long one has been in America, there seems to be a barrier in terms of race and culture. It is difficult for a Korean to go beyond this barrier. For instance, if one ignores our customs—if one kisses a lover in public, or if one eats in public without sharing food with others—one usually gets criticism. When Americans eat in public—and they often offer you some of their food—I am sure that they have a clear notion of "my food" and "your food," which we do not have.[36]

To her, Koreans neither can nor should be fully Americanized. They retain their Korean cultural baggage. Even if they try, they will not be accepted easily by Americans. She adds, "If Americans treat them (Koreans) as a new sort of American, it is only when it is in their interest, and no more. Many second-generation Korean Americans have problems when they enter college. They are not regarded as American, but they are not accepted by Koreans either.

INFIRM ROOTS, *HUNDULINUN PPURI*

The interviewees constantly compare different social systems and cultures, assessing pros and cons. In this typology, they are able to find some positive elements from the American culture while discarding some bad elements in Korean culture. Mr. Kwon, who arrived in America ten years ago, says, "The quality of education itself, I think, is better here. In Korea, emphasis is given to cramming; in America, although students don't listen to their teachers, there is more emphasis on creativity and using a different method of teaching."

Others agree that American culture has positive values, often associated with rational and liberal values, while Korean culture needs some reform. Aiming at becoming "truly deeply Americanized," Mr. Park states that he will lead a more American life in the future while discarding bad aspects of Korean culture:

> I want to adopt the way of life Americans live, but more so internally than externally.[37] I came here with an understanding of Korean culture, having been educated in Korea. This would be a chance for me to correct the bad aspects

> of Korean culture, such as excessive formalism and Korean time [failure to be punctual]. For instance, in the past, if my nephew here ate food alone, I felt unsettled, because in Korea food should be shared, never eaten alone. But now I understand it well. Also, I now object if someone is not punctual.[38]

As far as the American family is concerned, many immigrants are struck by the differences in gender and generation relationships. To Mr. Nam, American family life is epitomized by its high divorce rate yet, he feels that, depending on their level of income, many American husbands and wives seem to enjoy life together a great deal. He also sees less discrimination between the sexes. "American women seem to make many important decisions—at least 60 percent of family decisions."[39]

BEARING DELICIOUS FRUIT

To many Korean immigrants "true Americanization" is multifaceted. They mean a state where one holds on to the positive aspects of Korean culture and, at the same time, incorporates the best aspects of American culture. As a goal, true Americanization comes after the realization of the dream of establishment of a small business. However, the quest for this dream brings out both negative aspects of Korean and American culture, especially individualism, materialism, and other traits. Only if one adopts American values selectively and critically can one be said to be truly Americanized.

It should also be emphasized that this creative process will not be complete until Korean immigrants are able to be critical of both Korean and American cultures. It is not easy to add American culture to Korean culture. Only when they review Korean culture critically and decide which aspects to keep and which to radically remove is there room for American culture and, subsequently, a new, Korean immigrant culture. Here, the Buddhist concept of emptiness can be helpful.[40] In other words, in order to gain something, one first has to empty oneself.

Therefore, the interviewees consider the political dimension crucial in their making of Korean American culture. For them, Americanization means becoming familiar with the American social structure, particularly the legal system—in other words, becoming integrated into the American system.[41] James, a Certified Public Accountant, observes, "(Initially) Koreans seem to be obsessed with the idea that they should not pay taxes in America. They thought of America as a free country, and, if at all possible, they want to avoid paying taxes. However, as children grow up and get educated, they realize their mistake, and are ready to pay taxes fully."[42] Mr. Hwang, a bakery owner, holds what is perhaps the most widespread view among established Korean immigrants. What Americanization means to him is a blend of the best values of each culture, striving for the ideal of "true Americanization":

> In addition to understanding the laws here, we have to try to learn the language and the culture. For instance, if we do not do so, our children will not listen to

> what their parents say, and will become too individualistic. But we must not forget our own cultural tradition. We should not do any shameful things, and not forget Asian pride and virtues. However, as long as we live in America, we must also try to adapt ourselves to this new environment.[43]

A second-generation Korean American wrote about his own process of acculturation:

> My renewed love for Korean culture has simplified my life because I can focus my efforts on carving out a new bicultural identity. My new awareness of Korean American issues causes many internal conflicts. I have become overtly sensitive to the second-class treatment all minorities seem to tolerate. . . . I assert myself against misconceptions others have about Asian American males, and I begrudgingly let others know I am Asian and American. . . . I am always homesick. Despite my American citizenship, my disappearing Korean accent, and all my late-night humor derived from David Letterman, I did not feel like I was American. I wanted to go home, but I felt like I had no homeland. Korea was no longer home. I knew I was a foreigner the moment I was charged more for taxi fare. I realized I had to make America my home.[44]

Some definitely feel that Korean immigrants should be more interested in political life beyond their individual economic concerns. Mr. Pyo, a medical technician, worries about the lack of unity in the Korean community, especially compared to Chinatown, or to the Jewish and Italian communities. But he notes some progress in Haninhoe, "The Korean Association of Greater New York. We knew at first only for its name. After going through a period of transition, now it is getting in better shape, working on juvenile delinquency, senior citizen problems, and for contact with other ethnic groups."[45]

THE SUTURING OF CULTURES

However, the process of grafting does not tell much about immigrants' conceptions of morality and historicity. Here, perhaps, we need to shift our metaphor by referring to two different kinds of surgery: imbricating and suturing.[46] Imbricating implies having the edges overlapping in a regular arrangement like the scales of a fish, or sewing pieces of cloth, emphasizing plausible appearance only, regardless of function. In contrast, suturing (or articulating) is the process of joining by means of a seam of stitches. Theoreticians who argue for the suture model agree that it provides the agency whereby the subject emerges within discourse, and, at least ideally, takes up a position congruent with the existing cultural order.[47] The process of grafting seems to be more similar to imbricating than to suturing. Although Korean immigrants see culture making in terms of grafting, this scheme lacks a sense of historicity. However, their construction of culture also involves struggle, confusion, and contradiction in a creative, heterogeneous, and dynamic process.

CONCLUSION

Korean immigrants' world is an interconnected social space in which every day they figuratively travel back and forth between Korea and the United States. Korean/U.S. borderless social space emerged as a result of transnational capitalism, especially modern transportation and communication technologies rather than geographical contiguity, in this era of Pacific Rim affluence.

Within this setting, Korean immigrants see establishment of their own small businesses as a shortcut to realizing the American dream. In pursuit of anjong in their economic lives immigrants mobilize kin networks, participate in voluntary associations, and organize home life. Korean culture is retained and reconfigured selectively, in relation to historical, political, and economic conditions in the United States.

Thus, the making of Korean immigrant culture is historically situated, politically charged, and creative. Immigrants visualize this process in terms of tree grafting. As anthropologist Michael Taussig notes, many of our cultural explanations are based on body and biology.[48] For immigrants, Korean culture is selectively, and contradictorily, remembered and forgotten, transformed and reconfigured. Therefore, Korean immigrant cultural formation involves contradiction, hybridity, and heterogeneity—all aimed at creating a creole culture. As their main strategy, Korean immigrants rely on cultural and ideological criticism of both Korean and American cultures. Their strategy results in four different outcomes: bearing inedible fruit; grafting good Korean tree on to a bad American tree; grafting a bad Korean tree on to a good American tree; and bearing tasty fruit.

Why do we talk about Korean or American culture at all? Why is culture important? As Renato Rosaldo[49] notes, North American notions of the melting pot make immigration a rite of cultural stripping.[50] Moreover, for racial minorities, including Korean immigrants, culture represents their economic and political power in the United States, and hence culture becomes a weapon in helping them struggle to attain self-esteem and empowerment.

Unlike in Korea, in the multicultural society of America, Korean norms are consistently questioned and challenged. Korean immigrants have to change and adapt, and a new Korean American culture emerges in the process. Korean American culture is also greatly influenced by other cultures and will also eventually influence other cultures in America. Who knows? Perhaps one day Korean-American culture may integrate elements from Latino and African-American culture, and vice versa. By that time, we may envision Korean American culture as only having its origins in the Korean peninsula. Its development and elaboration will be in America.

NOTES

1. The progressive group was YKASEC (Young Korean American Service and Education Center).

2. Regionalism plays a strong role in Korean culture—in marriage, employment, and housing. For instance, in deciding on marriage partners, people from the southeastern part of Korea tend to avoid those from the southwestern part.

3. Similarly, Korean immigrants develop cultural constructions of generation identity. For instance, one-third of the Koreans in America are said to be 1.5 generation (those who came to the United States as children or teenagers). In addition, Koreans further distinguish 1.3, 1.7, and 2.5 generation Korean Americans. These distinctions have much to do with characteristics of Korean immigration history, each individual's immigrant experience, and their political participation in U.S. society.

4. In this article, I use the terms "Korean immigrants" and "Korean Americans" interchangeably. Although *Korean American* generally refers to people born in the United States, I expand its usage to Korean immigrants. My usage reflects the way Korean immigrants use the term, which might be due to the small number of Koreans born in the United States (less than 13 percent).

5. I collected narratives through the cultural model method on the topic "being and becoming American." Naomi Quinn and Dorothy Holland, "Culture and Cognition" in Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn eds, Cultural Models in Language and Thought," Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 3–42.

6. On the one hand, I felt tension due to the ways that Koreans are Americanized in the United States. For instance, I remember feeling awkward when my friend insisted that I dress more formally—i.e., that I wear suits—as if that were the proper dress of Americanized Koreans in the States. However, in order to conduct research on the Korean immigrant community, I tried to fit into their definition of ideal behavior.

7. Donald Nonini and Ong Aihwa, "Introduction: Chinese Transnationalism as an Alternative Modernity," in *Edges of Empire: Culture and Identity in Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming), 1–54.

8. See Khachig Tololyan, "The Nation-State and Its Others: In Lieu of a Preface," *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 3–7.

9. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford, England, and Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

10. Ibid., 147.

11. Paul Ong, Edna Bonocich, and Lucie Cheng, "The Political Economy of Capitalist Restructuring and the New Asian Immigration" *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring*, ed. Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng, 270 (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1994): 1–31.

12. In this sense, Korean immigrants will have to deal with gender discrimination, national chauvinism, and ethnocentrism in Korea as well as racism and sexism in the United States.

13. Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1992), 264.

14. Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 27.

15. Andrew Apter. "Herskovits's Heritage: Rethinking Syncretism in the African Diaspora," *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 251.

16. Eric Gable, Richard Handler, and Anna Lawson, "On the Uses of Relativism: Fact, Conjecture, and Black and White Histories at Colonial Williamsburg," *American Ethnologist* 19 (1992): 802.

17. Lauria-Perricelli Antonio, "Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Closing Remarks" in *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered*, ed. Nina Glick-Schiller, ed. Linda Basch, Christina Blanc-Szanton, 251–258 (New York: The New York Academy of Sciences, 1992).

18. Stewart, Ella, "Ethnic Cultural Diversity: An Interpretive Study of Cultural Differences and Communication Styles Between Korean Merchants/Employees and Black Patrons in South Los Angeles," (master's thesis, California State Univ., Los Angeles, 1989), 17–19.

19. I do not deny that there is inequality in Asian societies; however, I find this statement problematic, because it stereotypes and oversimplifies Asian cultures.

20. Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation* (London: Associated Univ. Press, 1984).

21. Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity*, 262.

22. For further discussion on this ideology of *anjong*, see Kyeyoung Park, *The Korean American Dream* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

23. Hurh and Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America*.

24. Besides eating habits, there are many other ways to measure Americanization; for example, mannerisms and expressions. If an immigrant shrugs his shoulder and says, "I can't help it," or, "God bless you" when someone coughs, he is described as being Americanized.

25. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: ARK Paperbacks, 1966).

26. Kyeyoung Park, "The Cultivation of Korean Immigrants on American Soil: The Discourse on Cultural Construction" *Yosong Ch'ongu*, Korean American Women for Action 3 (Spring 1986).

27. David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 83.

28. Wang, Ling-chi, "The Structure of Dual Domination: Toward a Paradigm for the Study of the Chinese Diaspora in the U.S.," *Amerasia Journal* 21 (1995): 149–170.

29. Generally, immigrants strive to reach the ideal state of "Americanized positive" and "Koreanized positive." If they cannot, they try to avoid the worst situation—that of losing good aspects of Korean culture and adopting only the bad aspects of American culture.

30. Although it is not clear how an immigrant moves in one direction, to what degree he or she has become established in the United States certainly makes a big difference. However, anjong is not the only factor affecting change.

31. Interview with Mrs. Kwon.

32. Interview with Mr. Kim.

33. Interview with Mr. Pai.

34. Many Korean immigrants refer to Americans as white Americans. When they talk about African Americans, they invoke the racial category of black.

35. Park, "Cultivation of Korean Immigrants," *Yosong Ch'ongu II*, (Spring 1986).

36. Interview with Ms. Choi.

37. Here, external adoption refers to superficial or cosmetic change, whereas inner change is more fundamental change, for instance, moral innovation.

38. Interview with Mr. Park.

39. Interview with Mr. Nam

40. I owe this insight to Dr. Cho Manchul, Korean psychiatrist.

41. In this sense, acculturation is regarded as assimilation—that is, integration into the American legal system in terms of knowledge of and participation in the tax and welfare systems as well familiarity with police, court, and government.

42. Interview with James, a Certified Public Accountant.

43. Interview with Mr. Hwang, a baker.

44. Bobby Kim, *Korean Journal* (September 1993): 20.

45. Interview with Mr. Pyo.

46. I owe this insight to Mr. Lee Manwoo, Korean sociologist.

47. Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 236.

48. Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

49. Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

50. The immigrants, or at any rate their children or grandchildren, supposedly become absorbed into the dominant culture that erases their tradition—autobiography, history, heritage, language, and other parts of their so-called cultural baggage (Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth*, 210).

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

During the past two decades there has been an unprecedented outpouring of literature on Korean Americans, much of it written by scholars of that ethnicity. The most thorough overview of the Korean American experience is Won Moon Hurh, *The Korean Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998). It can be supplemented with several other studies, most of which bear the same prosaic title: Brian Lehrer, *The Korean Americans* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1996); Lauren Lee, *Korean Americans* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1995); Ann Hagen Griffiths, *The Korean Americans* (New York: Facts on File, 1992); Nichol Bryan, *Korean Americans* (Edina, MN: Abdo Publications, 2004); Alexandra Bandon, *Korean Americans* (New York: New Discovery, 1994); Tamara Orr, *The Korean Americans* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2003), and Bong-Yuon Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979). Two very recent studies provide important new insights: Sheila Smith Noonan, *Korean Immigration* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers, 2004) and Ilpyong Kim, ed., *Korean-Americans: Past, Present, and Future* (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International Corp., 2004).

Several other studies have attempted to provide insights into the processes of acculturation and assimilation that have and are affecting Korean immigrants and their progeny. One of the most detailed analyses is Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation* (London: Associated Universities Press, 1984). See also Won Moo Hurh, "Toward a Korean-American Ethnicity: Some Theoretical Models," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 3 (1980): 444–464; *Assimilation of the Korean Minority in the United States* (Elkins Park, PA: Philip Jaison Foundation, 1977); and *Comparative Study of Korean Immigrants in the United States: A Typological Approach* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1977). A more recent effort is Nazli Kibria, *Becoming Asian American: Second Generation Chinese and Korean American Identities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2002). Particularly useful in understanding the adaptive process is Moon H. Jo,

Korean Immigrants and the Challenge of Adjustment (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999). Using the Korean-descended population of Hawaii as his study group, Peter Hyun, *In the New World: The Making of a Korean American* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1995), finds some significant differences in the speed and degree of assimilation from those scholars who have concentrated on the Koreans who have settled on the United States mainland.

Since Hawaii was the area of first settlement for the earliest immigrants from Korea, Myongsup Shin and Daniel B. Lee, eds., *Korean Immigrants in Hawaii: A Symposium on Their Background History, Acculturation, and Public Policy Issues* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1978) is indispensable reading. So too is Brenda L. Kwon, *Beyond Ke'eaumoku: Koreans, Nationalism, and Local Culture in Hawaii* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999). See also several studies by Wayne Patterson, especially *The Ilse: First-Generation Korean Immigrants in Hawaii, 1903–1973* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2000) and *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 1886–1910* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2000). Those seeking a variety of analyses on the adaptation process should consult Hyung-Chan Kim, ed., *Korean Diaspora: Historical and Sociological Studies of Korean Immigration and Assimilation in North America* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio Press, 1977). Another vital perspective is provided by Chang-soo Lee, "The United States Immigration Policy and the Settlement of Koreans in America," *Korea Observer* 6 (1975): 412–451. The economic dimensions of recent Korean immigration to the United States is examined thoroughly in Paul Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng, eds., *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994). Although Hawaii and California have been the principal destination of Korean immigrants, there are sizeable settlements in other large cities, especially New York and Chicago. See, for example, Kyu Park, *Korean Americans in Chicago* (Chicago: Arcadia Press, 2003) and Kyeyoung Park, *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

One of the biggest developments in Korean American communities has been the change in the status of women. See Eui-Young Yu and Earl H. Phillips, eds., *Korean Women in Transition: At Home and Abroad* (Los Angeles: California State Univ., 1987). For a highly positive interpretation of that development in the early years of immigration, see "Korean Women of America: From Subordination to Partnership, 1903–1930," *Amerasia Journal* 11 (1984): 1–28. See also Alice Y. Chai, "Korean Women in Hawaii, 1903–1945," Nobuya Tsuchida, ed., *Asian and Pacific American Experiences: Women's Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Asian/Pacific American Learning Resource Center, 1982); Haeyun Juliana Kim, "Voices from the Shadows: The Lives of Korean War Brides," *Amerasia Journal* 17 (1991): 15–30; and Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington, 1990).

One of the most important results of immigration to the United States has been the outpouring of a distinctive Korean American literature. See, for example, Kyhan Lee, "Younghill Kang and the Genesis of Korean-American Literature," *Korea Journal* 31 (1991): 63–78; Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu, *East to America: Korean American Life Stories*, (New York: New Press, 1996); and Elaine H. Kim, *Echoes upon Echoes: New Korean American Writings* (New York: Asian American Writers' Workshop, 2002). Another result has been tensions in the area of religion. See especially Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner, *Korean Americans and their Religions: Pilgrims and*

Missionaries from a Different Shore (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2001) and Sharon A. Suh, *Being Buddhist in a Christian World: Gender and Community in a Korean American Temple* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000).

One of the most unfortunate outcomes of immigration to the United States has been the developing antipathy between Korean shopkeepers and African Americans in the inner cities of large metropolitan areas. That phenomenon has been analyzed from a number of perspectives in Molefi Kete Asante and Eungjun Min, eds., *Socio-cultural Conflict Between African American and Korean American* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 2000). Focusing on the second largest Korean American community in the nation, Claire Jean Kim, *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black–Korean Conflict in New York City* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), examines an important aspect of that continuing antipathy. A more positive outlook for the future is Patrick J. Joyce, *No Fire Next Time: Black-Korean Conflicts and the Future of America's Cities* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2003).

MULTICULTURALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

A Comparative Guide to Acculturation and Ethnicity

Revised and Expanded Edition

Edited by
John D. Buenker and Lorman A. Ratner

GREENWOOD PRESS
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Multiculturalism in the United States : a comparative guide to acculturation and ethnicity / edited by John D. Buenker and Lorman A. Ratner.—Rev. and expanded ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-313-32404-2 (alk. paper)
1. Minorities—United States. 2. Multiculturalism—United States. 3. Pluralism (Social sciences)—United States. 4. Acculturation—United States. 5. Ethnicity—United States. 6. United States—Ethnic relations. 7. United States—Race relations. I. Buenker, John D. II. Ratner, Lorman.
E184.A1M85 2005
305.8'00973—dc22 2004022473

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Copyright © 2005 by John D. Buenker and Lorman A. Ratner

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, by any process or technique, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2004022473
ISBN: 0-313-32404-2

First published in 2005

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.greenwood.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48-1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1