

Divided Fates:

The State, Race, and Adaptation of Korean Immigrants in
Japan and the United States

Kazuko Suzuki

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A Puzzle of Invisible Race

In American society, we often talk in terms of race. But the term 'race' is not as simple as it may sound. For many Americans who live in a society where people are divided along visible racial lines and classified into officially-given racial categories, race often means apparent physical differences and skin color. My American students in Race and Ethnicity courses are puzzled whenever I make comments such as "Koreans have been severely discriminated against in Japan in domains such as education, employment, marriage, and so forth. The more I study about American racial/ethnic relations, the more analogies I find between the social position of Koreans in Japan and that of African Americans." My students wonder how it can be that Koreans are discriminated against by the Japanese, who seem to belong to the same race, if Koreans speak perfect Japanese and even dress like the Japanese.

This puzzle about invisible racial differences between the Japanese and Koreans in Japan is not just encountered by my students. It is also a puzzle for Western intellectuals who know that 'race' is a socio-political construct, but believe that non-Western countries simply replicated Western conceptualizations of 'race.' By examining how Koreans are perceived differently in Japan and the United States in terms of 'race,' I can offer an interesting intellectual opportunity to think about peculiarities of racial ideologies that each state holds, and how such peculiarities affect the social positioning of the same ethnic group in each country.

Before I solve this puzzle, let me present the larger project discussed in my book. The content of this paper is based on a book manuscript that I am currently completing, which compares Korean diasporic groups in Japan and the United States. In my book project, I highlight the contrasting adaptation of Koreans in Japan and the United States, and illuminate how the destinies of immigrants who originally belonged to the same national collectivity diverged, depending upon destinations and how they were received in a certain state and society within particular historical contexts. I introduced an international comparison focused on a single immigrant group, which is rare in existing studies. By doing so, I attempted 1) to present one effective way to better understand variance in immigrant adaptation, by avoiding the circular argument based on cultural theories; and 2) to contribute to the development of a middle-range theory that can anticipate adaptation of immigrants. The meta-question asked in this book is a cardinal concern among social scientists

who are interested in immigration: what accounts for the varying forms of immigrant adaptation to host societies?¹

Immigrant Adaptation and Cultural Theories

The factors that may affect immigrant adaptation are mainly classified into two categories: one is internal and the other is external to immigrants. The internal factors concern the human capital of immigrants such as education, class background, gender, and cultural values that they brought from their original countries. The external factors are associated with circumstances surrounding immigrants. For instance, these are the labor market conditions of the host country, the existence of co-ethnic communities at the time of their arrival, the context of reception (i.e., how they are received by the host society), and the historical context of migration (Portes and Rumbaut 1996/2006; Portes and Zhou 1993; Nelson and Tienda 1985). In identifying these factors, the field of immigration and ethnic/racial studies usually compares experiences of various immigrant groups within a single country or society. Needless to say, comparisons from such a domestic perspective have made a significant contribution to the literature of immigrant adaptation. Yet, they often create a controversial debate regarding the relationship between the cultural traits of immigrants and their adjustment patterns

Cultural theorists contend that the distinct cultural characteristics of certain nationalities or ethnic groups lead them to a particular kind of adaptation. Some argue that economic success and better adjustment to the host society of certain immigrant groups are culturally programmed. There are many cultural theorists who try to explain the variance of adaptation patterns, especially an orientation toward entrepreneurship and the extraordinary economic success of some immigrant groups such as Jews and Chinese (Mangiafico 1988; Kitano 1980; Patterson and Kim 1977; Harrison 1992; Moynihan 1965; misinterpretation of Lewis 1959, 1965, 1966). We can trace back the origin of such cultural theories to Max Weber's thesis about the Protestant ethic and its effect on the development of capitalism. However, as some scholars argue, cultural theories are always *post factum* and rarely anticipate specific correlations between adaptation and cultural traits. Furthermore, we cannot tell precisely whether the immigrants' culture and values come from the sending country or are reactive products of confrontation with the host society. We then are left with a classic chicken-and-egg dilemma.

Rather than being stuck in the circular argument based on cultural theories, social scientists must seek alternative ways to better understand variance in immigrant adaptation. For this purpose, I would like to propose an alternative framework by shifting from domestic to cross-national comparison with reference to

Table 1: Contrast between Zainichi and US Koreans

	ZAINICHI KOREANS	US KOREANS
Population	650,000 (Largest Foreign Group) ²	More than 2 million
Generation	First - Fourth (Fifth)	First - 1.5 (Second)
Level of Acculturation	Considerably High	Low
Propensity to Naturalization	Low	High
Racial Affinity (to Mainstream)	Similar	Distinct

a single ethnic group. The shift from domestic to international perspectives with reference to a single ethnic group helps control the effect of culture of a constant immigrant group to a certain extent. Moreover, the comparison of diasporic groups which made different kinds of adjustments in different loci allows me to identify important structural factors that differentiated their adaptation in each country. In this study, I apply this logic with reference to Korean diasporic groups in Japan and the United States. Since these two diasporic groups made different kinds of adjustments, it makes more sense to focus on the examination of external factors rather than simply ask how much of their adjustment depends on their own cultural, ethnic, and national characteristics.

A New Framework of Comparing Immigrant Adaptation

Despite their common ethnic origin, Korean immigrants demonstrate very different adaptation patterns in Japan and the United States. Here, I would like to introduce one important term: Zainichi Koreans. Koreans in Japan call themselves, and came to be called by the Japanese state and society, Zainichi Koreans. The literal meaning of Zainichi is ‘staying in Japan temporarily.’ One may wonder why old-comers who have been in Japan for more than sixty years are still called ‘temporary’ residents. This term reflects the desire of many Koreans to someday return to their homeland, especially after World War II. However, those ambitions faded over time. Zainichi Koreans now are permanent residents of Japan due to diplomatic arrangements with Japan and South Korea, and many of them no longer have a desire to go back. Despite this, the term has survived, reflecting the reality of institutional discrimination by the Japanese state and Japanese society. As you can see in Table 1, currently about 650,000 Koreans reside in Japan. Slightly less than forty percent of all registered foreigners in Japan are Koreans. They are already in the fourth generation. They are highly acculturated to Japanese society: they speak

Japanese natively; they behave like the Japanese; they use Japanese names.³ Therefore, it is hard to distinguish between Korean immigrants and the Japanese. However, Koreans in Japan remain ‘aliens’ on a legal level. The naturalization rate has increased since the 1990s, but there still exists great pressure against naturalization due to social sanctions within the Korean community who see such individuals as ‘traitors.’ One can say that Koreans in Japan have formed a highly acculturated but structurally foreign community. Koreans in the United States, meanwhile, have a stronger propensity to naturalize; yet they are culturally, linguistically, and racially distinct from the Anglo-centered society.

For this project, I conducted frequent fieldwork in Japan (Tokyo, Kanagawa, and Kobe areas) and the United States (New York, New Jersey, and California) between 1998 and 2005. I chose these locations because these are known for the concentration of Koreans. In particular, 47.2 percent of the total Korean population in the United States lives in California and New York.⁴ My fieldwork in Japan included in-depth interviews with Korean immigrants and Japanese respondents and informant interviews with the staff of Korean organizations and Japanese governmental officials, as well as participant observation.⁵ Similar interviews were conducted with US respondents and informants. I also used secondary sources. These are law and ordinance texts; debates regarding immigration and race and ethnic relations that appeared in official documents and in the media, including the following: statements by state officials, politicians, and social groups; documents on legal cases; immigration, naturalization and other statistics; brochures and web sites of ethnic organizations; and published survey data on the attitudes of immigrants and natives. In my cross-national comparison, I employ a method that Charles Tilly terms ‘a variation-finding comparison.’ According to him, it is a useful comparison that rules out “a principle of variation in the character or intensity of a phenomenon having more than one form by examining systematic differences among instances” (Tilly 1984: 116).

Based on this research strategy, I conceptualize immigrant adaptation as an outcome of the mode of immigrant incorporation. The mode of incorporation explains how immigrants are received at the three different levels in a host country: the state, societal, and ethnic-community levels. First, the state is important, because its ideology and policy on how to manage racial/ethnic diversity not only determines sizable immigration flows, but also affects the legal framework directly relevant to immigrants. Second, society is relevant, since how a particular immigrant group is typified is related to, for example, their survival strategies, the confinement of the group to a certain segment of the labor market, and the formation of collective identity. Third, observation of the ethnic community is necessary, because ethnic

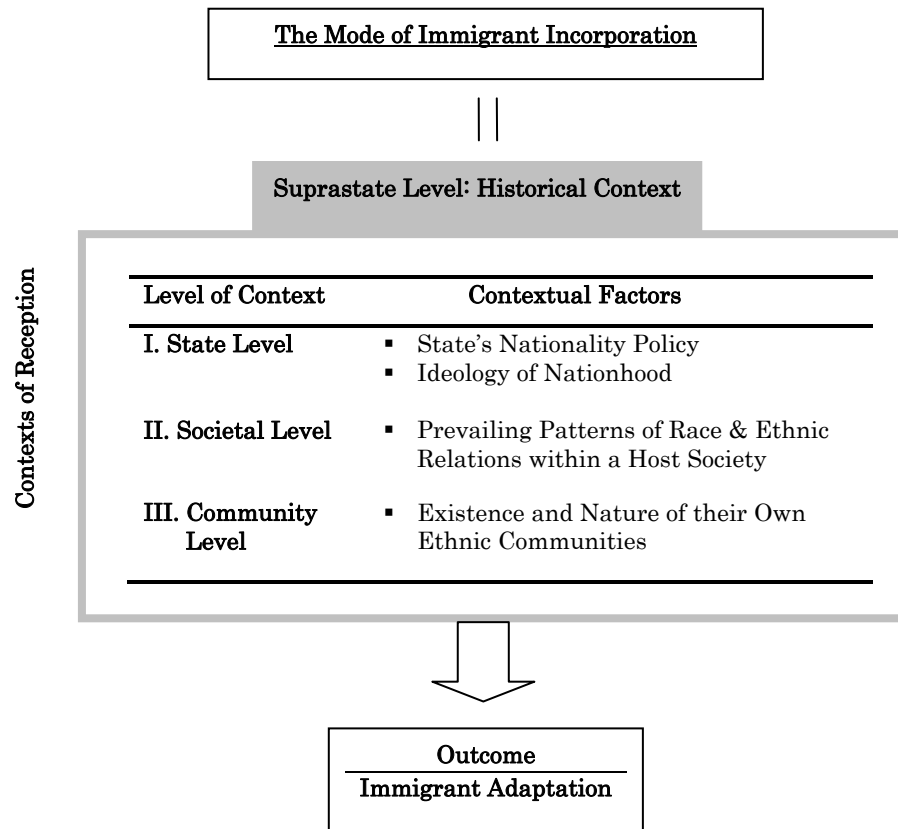


Figure 1: The Mode of Immigrant Incorporation

communities frequently cushion the impact of cultural change, and protect immigrants against outside prejudice and initial economic difficulties by providing social capital (refer to Portes and Rumbaut 1996/2006: 92-93). I propose that the most relevant contexts of immigrant reception are defined by the host state's policy and ideology of nationhood; prevailing patterns of race and ethnic relations within a host society (including the relationship between state and society); and existence and nature of their own ethnic communities. The combination of these contextual factors at each level determines the distinctive state mode of immigrant incorporation, and is systematically linked to differences in immigrant adaptation within particular historical contexts. Therefore, deciphering the combination of the contextual factors and its impact on the experience of Korean immigrants is a central agenda in this project. In order to explore the covariation between historical, structural factors and immigrant adaptation, I draw upon two methodologies from comparative historical sociology, historical interpretation and analysis of causal regularities (Skocpol 1984; see also Hein 1992). Figure 1 illustrates the framework that I use for my entire

Table 2: Historical Context

	ZAINICHI KOREANS	US KOREANS
Major cause of migration	Deportation ↓ Colonized Migrants	1965 Immigration Act ↓ Voluntary Migrants
Timing of major migration	Before Cold War	After Cold War
<u>Outcomes</u>	Politicized, two split communities (Pro-North vs. Pro-South) ↓ National security risk for the Japanese state	Geopolitically important ↓ Ally of the American state
Created fundamentally different surroundings		

project.⁶ In this paper, I will focus on some aspects of the state and societal level analysis, in particular in relation to the puzzle that I presented at the beginning: a puzzle of invisible racial differences between the Japanese and Koreans.⁷

Historical Context of the Korean Migrations

History itself is an important factor that makes each migration unique. Table 2 summarizes the differences in the historical context of the Korean migration to Japan and the United States. The major Korean migration to Japan occurred after Japan annexed Korea in 1910 (Chung and Tipton 1997; Kim 1997; Ha 1997; Weiner 1989). Many Koreans were later deported to Japan to fill the manpower vacuum created by the war economy during WWII (Nakatsuka 1986; Lee and De Vos 1981). In contrast to the forced, unwilling migration stream to Japan, the influx of Korean migrants to the United States was due to the change of US immigration law in 1965, and primarily driven by Koreans' desire to seek a better life in an affluent country (Park 1997; Illsoo Kim 1981). Here, Robert Blauner's classification of minorities into two groups (colonized minorities and voluntary immigrants) is particularly useful in the analysis of the formation of dominant-minority relations in each country. Blauner (1972) argues that the nature of initial contact determines subsequent intergroup relations. For instance, in the United States, African Americans are a typical case of colonized migrants. In this study, Zainichi Koreans are a typical case of colonized migrants, while the majority of US Koreans are typical voluntary immigrants.⁸

At the same time, the timing of the major Korean migration stream to each country in the larger historical background also affected the fates of Korean immigrants. The Cold War, in which these Korean diasporas developed, established very different contexts of reception for Koreans in the Japanese and American states.

On the one hand, Zainichi Koreans lost their homeland after the partition of the Korean peninsula at the 38th parallel. The Zainichi Korean community was also split into pro-North and pro-South communities and became a battlefield for political hegemony of the two competing regimes on the Korean peninsula (Lee and De Vos 1981). As a result, the Japanese government has regarded Zainichi Koreans as a potential security risk, regardless of their geographical origins in the North or the South. This created an unfavorable reception for Zainichi Koreans in this specific historical moment.

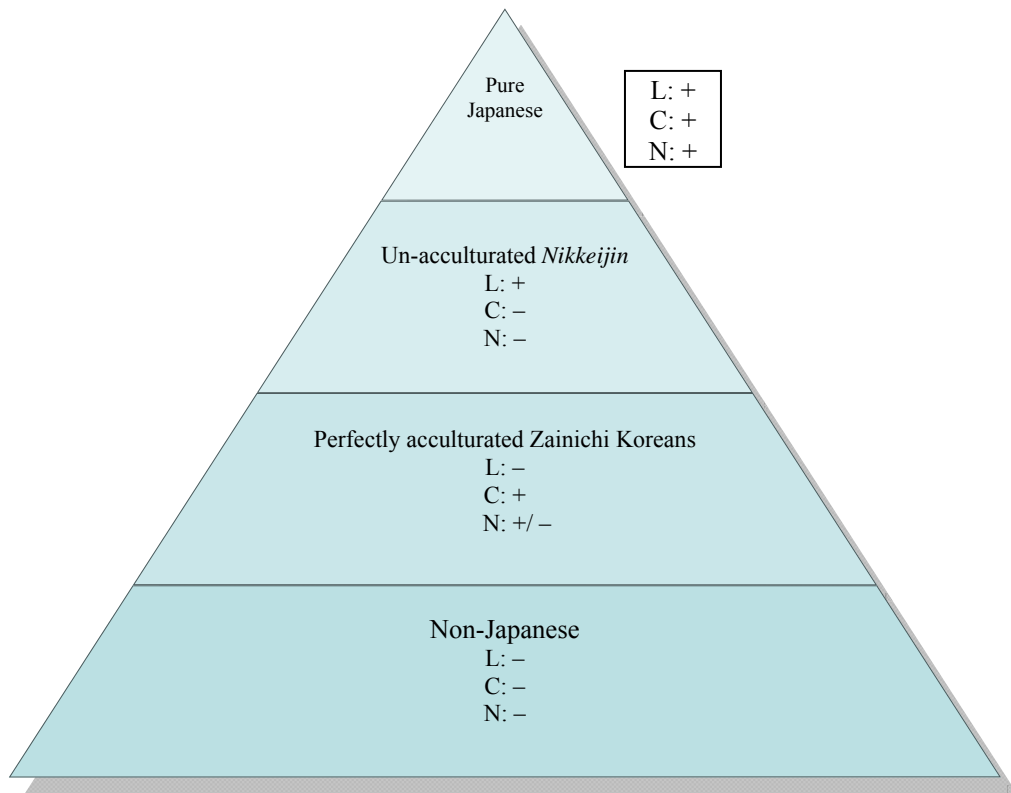
On the other hand, US Koreans were beneficiaries of this political struggle. The geopolitical importance of South Korea in the Cold War led to American investment in this developing country. South Korea achieved remarkable economic growth in a very short period of time, and joined the developed countries toward the end of the 1980s (Mason et al. 1980; Kibaik Lee 1961/1984; Eckert et al. 1990). Consequently, emerging middle-class Koreans migrated to the United States for further economic opportunities (Light and Bonacich 1988, Yoon 1997). Unlike other Asian immigrant groups such as the Chinese and Japanese immigrants who came to the United States when the country was overtly discriminatory against so-called Asiatics, the majority of US Koreans do not have to confront severe racial discrimination, at least at the state level. Moreover, in the context of the Cold War, South Korea became an ally of the US government. The perceived status difference between colonized migrants and voluntary migrants, as well as perceptions as a potential security risk or political ally in the context of the Cold War, established fundamentally different environments for Koreans in the Japanese and American states.

The Context of Reception at the State Level

In American life, 'race' is a basic and official taxonomy of personal identification. To put it differently, it is often 'race' in the United States that differentiates, hierarchizes, stigmatizes, and marginalizes minorities. In this sense, Koreans with 'Mongolian' phenotype are not actively welcomed by the American state whose mainstream is Anglo-Saxon white, despite their high educational background and professional skills. However, the nationality policy of the American state is not as thick as in Japan: nationality is attributed based on the principle of *jus soli*. If the person was born in US territory, he/she is an American citizen. In other words, the American state conceptualizes its state membership from a territorial perspective. In terms of naturalization, it is a political choice by individuals; therefore, naturalization applicants are allowed to maintain their original culture (under cultural pluralism) if they satisfy certain conditions such as length of residence, knowledge of American history, and the ability to speak English. This allows US Koreans to structure their ethnic and national identities in a hierarchical manner by molding hyphenated identities such as 'Korean-American' or 'Asian-American.' In other words, American

citizenship is a form of thin citizenship, which does not cause much tension between one's ethno-cultural and political identities.

In contrast to the politico-territorial approach to citizenship of the American state, as well as a racial approach in official classification, the Japanese state adopts what I term a 'bifurcation approach,' which makes a strict distinction between Japanese and non-Japanese based on nationality. But nationality, for the Japanese people, does not simply mean national membership. In Japanese, the concepts of 'race,' 'ethnicity' and 'nation' are virtually indistinguishable (Weiner 1995: 448; Yoshino 1992: 25; Ubukata 1979), and the formulation race = ethnicity = nationality = culture is essential to the Japanese conceptualization of what makes one Japanese. The degree of Japaneseness can be analyzed by looking at three variables: lineage (which often connotes 'race' and is represented by Japanese blood), culture (ethnicity), and nationality (citizenship). Principally, the conflation of these variables determines the boundaries of the Japanese. But empirically, these variables do not carry equal weight (refer to Fukuoka 2000: xxvii-xxxv). In the postwar period, after Japan lost its colonial territories, Japanese nationhood has been redefined along exclusively ethno-genealogical lines, and cultural uniformity (or cultural monism as state sponsorship of one culture) became a key value for the Japanese nation-state. The ascendancy of race as Japanese blood over other phenomena is so evident that language adoption and cultural assimilation do not qualify one as a 'perfect' or 'first-class' Japanese, unless one has Japanese blood. Moreover, the Japanese state grants nationality according to the principle of *jus sanguinis* (by parentage), which tends to equate ethno-cultural loyalty and political allegiances to the state. Not only does this exclude considerably acculturated Zainichi Koreans from the national collectivity, but also, in a strict sense, it does not allow Zainichi Koreans to become perfectly Japanese even after naturalization.⁹ Also, naturalization criteria are very stringent and force applicants toward significant acculturation. Such a racial ideology makes nationality endorsed by Japanese blood an important basic taxonomic template imposed on Japanese society. The binary distinction in terms of nationality (i.e., whether one has Japanese blood or not) emerges as a criterion not only for admission for residence in Japan but also entitlement for privileges. Therefore, various kinds of institutional discrimination against Zainichi Koreans or non-Japanese are officially sanctioned by the Japanese state. In other words, Zainichi Koreans are racialized as an inferior group in Japan by not having Japanese blood: race as blood is not visible as in the case of race in the United States, which is often signified by skin color and phenotype.



Japanese Racial Ideology: Lineage (L) = Culture (C) = Nationality (N)
 ↑
 Most important

Figure 2: Degree of Japaneseness and Racial Hierarchy

Figure 2 illustrates the importance of lineage in the Japanese racial hierarchy by ranking four groups, in particular at the state level: 1) pure Japanese; 2) Zainichi Koreans; 3) *Nikkeijin* (e.g., Japanese Brazilians, whose ancestors migrated to Brazil when Japan was an immigrant-sending country, and migrated back to Japan mostly for economic betterment in the 1980s); and 4) pure non-Japanese. In lineage (L), a plus sign indicates that a person has ‘Japanese blood,’ while a minus sign indicates blood of a different ethnic group. In culture (C), a plus sign indicates that the person has internalized Japanese culture, while a minus sign indicates a different culture. In nationality (N), a plus sign indicates that a person holds Japanese nationality/citizenship, and a minus sign indicates that the person does not hold Japanese nationality, or is an ‘alien.’¹⁰ First, let us consider the American approach. If the phenotype of the mainstream (the top of the hierarchy) and immigrant groups is

Table 3: Contextual Factors at the State Level

	ZAINICHI KOREANS	US KOREANS
<u>Context of Reception</u>	Unfavorable	Neutral
Management of Social Diversity	Cultural Monism	Cultural Pluralism
Nationhood Definition	Ethno-Genealogical	Politico-Territorial
Nationality Attribution	<i>jus sanguinis</i>	<i>jus soli</i>
Basic Taxonomic Template	Bifurcation Approach based on Japanese Blood	Racial Approach based on Phenotype, Skin Color
<u>Outcomes</u>		
Contrasting positions of the ethnic culture and formations of identity	Thorough Japanization	Retention of Ethnic Culture
	Binary Categories (Japanese or Alien)	Racial Categories
	No Hyphenated Identity	Hyphenated Identity

the same, the groups that have two plus signs should be ranked higher than groups with one plus sign. This is because acculturation is an important factor in the American state mode of immigrant incorporation, and assimilation to the mainstream is regarded as an individual choice if the physical appearance is similar to the mainstream. However, this is not the case in Japan. The privileged position of *Nikkeijin* in Japanese immigration control is a good example of a clear ascendancy of bloodline to culture in the racialized Japanese identity. *Nikkeijin* who have only one plus sign take a higher position than thoroughly acculturated Zainichi Koreans, since the most important variable in defining Japaneseness is lineage in the postwar period.¹¹

This binary logic in the construction of the racialized Japanese national identity not only has a significant influence on the psychology of Japanese people and Zainichi Koreans, but also formulates their social identities. Despite antagonism with the Japanese government, the Zainichi Korean community shares the same assumption that nationality and ethnicity or affiliation and identity must be congruent (refer to Chung 2000). At the same time, this cultural monism of the Japanese state delegitimizes and suppresses other cultures, while putting pressure to acquire thorough Japanization. Under such a situation, not only minority cultures are suppressed but also Zainichi Koreans tend to hide their ethnic origin and are hindered in their cultivation of a 'hyphenated identity,' such as 'Korean-Japanese,' even after naturalization. While there is no precise statistical information available, it is said that about 90 percent of Zainichi Koreans hide their ethnic origin. To sum up, Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the contextual factors at the state

level and adaptation outcomes of Zainichi and US Koreans. The overall context of reception for US Koreans is neutral; while for Zainichi Koreans, it is unfavorable, which results in different patterns of collective identity formation.

The Context of Reception at the Societal Level

Contemporary racial theory conceptualizes race as socio-political construct (Omi and Winant 1986/1994; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Goldberg 1993; Feber 1998). This social construction approach to race demands scholars to read the process of differentiation, not to look for differences. Nonetheless, we know that we cannot deny the influence of race on immigrant adaptation: phenotypical difference remains a key racial signifier to differentiate people and has significant impact on immigrants' lives in reality. While the straightforward assimilation strategy did work for European immigrants in the United States, is the same strategy useful for the survival of Zainichi Koreans? Because of the racial similarity between Koreans and the Japanese - belonging to the same 'Mongolian' phenotype - once Koreans have acculturated and have acquired flawless Japanese without accents, it is hard to distinguish them from the Japanese, and passing into Japanese society seems an easier and safer survival strategy for many Koreans. Zainichi Koreans who wish to 'pass' can certainly enjoy the advantage of racial similarity. However, whether complete integration into the mainstream is possible or not is another story. Unlike some European groups in the United States who had been genuinely desired by the mainstream Americans for reasons of Anglo-conformity, Japanese society never truly desired full convergence of Koreans into the Japanese, who are so preoccupied with the purity of 'Japanese blood.' Therefore, what is at stake is not the degree of acculturation, but rather, whether or not Zainichi Koreans can impersonate the Japanese in order not to threaten the myth of Japan's ethnic/racial homogeneity. As long as they keep silence and successfully hide their ethnic origin, they are unlikely to become victims of direct prejudice and discrimination. As a result, they have developed various kinds of avoidance strategies to avoid situations in which their ethnic origin can be exposed to the public. For instance, they use Japanese names rather than legal Korean names in daily life. For this reason, Zainichi Koreans have become an invisible minority group. They can be visible only through two representative nation-wide ethno-political organizations (Mindan and Sōren) or at important life events such as entrance to university, employment, and marriage when they are asked to present legal documents on which their official Korean name is written. For instance, let me present one particularly good piece of anecdotal evidence. It is the moment when the invisible minority is exposed as a visible minority.

Akiko was a second generation Zainichi Korean who graduated from a well-known Japanese private university. One day she was driving a car in Tokyo. She was a beginning driver, and she ran into a guardrail on

the street. Fortunately, there were no pedestrians present, and she was not hurt. But she made a big dent on the guardrail. The police came and asked her to go to a police station in order to do some paperwork for the accident. Akiko thought that the policemen were kind and polite. At the police station, she filled out forms and wrote down in the name section her Japanese name she had used since her childhood. Then she was asked to show her identification card. As soon as they saw the ID card and found her legal Korean name, they quickly changed their attitudes toward her. “Oh! You are Korean, aren’t you? Do you think it’s OK for Koreans to do such a thing? Ah!!” Not only did they start blaming her for the accident, but they also started poking her on the forehead, saying insulting words. She was supposed to leave the police station after filling out the forms, but the policemen did not allow her to leave. She got scared, cried, and then called her father. Her father was a realtor and an economically successful first-generation Korean. He apologized and gave the policemen an envelope, in which there was money. Then she was finally released.

At the individual level, passing into mainstream society seems easier and depends on one’s choice, because of the similar phenotype between the Japanese and Koreans. But at the social level, unlike legal passing that can be achieved by naturalization, the process of social passing will never end for Zainichi Koreans. They have to live with the anxiety that their ethnic origin might be revealed in public someday. A Korean opinion leader told me one story about an elderly Korean who was hospitalized. The old Korean man shared a room with other patients. Because his family had hidden their Korean origin, their Japanese name was used for the nameplate on the door. He had spoken perfect Japanese before, but once he became gradually senile, he started speaking in Korean. His family was embarrassed, and asked a doctor to move him to a separate individual room. This old Zainichi Korean man, at the very end of his life, unconsciously jeopardized the social passing of his family members and relatives who visited him.

For many US Koreans, ‘perfect’ social passing is almost impossible due to the apparent racial difference from the white mainstream. This phenotypical ‘impossibility’ affects their passing choice in at least into two ways. First, it is a kind of passing called ‘adhesive socio-cultural adaptation’ (Hurh and Kim 1983) or integration with selective retention of ethnic culture.¹² Quite opposite to Milton Gordon’s assimilation theory that preconditions acculturation, Koreans can make an adjustment to American society without significant acculturation.¹³ Therefore, selective retention of ethnic culture is an effective survival strategy for US Koreans that can maximize social capital based on ethnicity, which can be attested by thriving ethnic enclave economies among US Koreans.

Another choice for US Koreans is a more aggressive one, mainly adopted by successful Koreans. These Koreans translate their own and their parents' upward socio-economic mobility in a larger society into proof of being white American. While the former approach admits their ethnic/racial distinctiveness and explores its own positive values, the second path not only negates their own ethnic distinctiveness but also redefines what makes for being a white American. For instance, in American universities there are clubs that have exclusive membership, such as sororities and fraternities. In one particular university, eating clubs are equivalent to these kinds of clubs. Some clubs are highly selective and only for students who are "smart," "good-looking," and whose parents are rich and occupationally influential or prestigious in the United States. These conditions usually mean that such exclusive clubs are generally only for white students. According to a person who is well acquainted with the eating club system of this university, Asian and African American students apply for clubs with more lenient criteria and shy away from such notoriously exclusive clubs, because they know that they apparently "do not satisfy these conditions" due to their race. He knew, however, some Asian female students who applied to these clubs known for being highly exclusive. These Asian students were rejected by the club and then complained about the result: "They said they were 'white.' Their families are rich, and their fathers have prestigious occupations. They asserted they were 'white' because of their parents' socio-economic status."

These female students did not complain about 'racism' against Asians. Rather, they complained that they should have been regarded as white, because they are children of 'white' people who overcame their Asianness through economic and/or occupational upward mobility. In other words, rather than criticizing 'racism,' they attempted to redefine whiteness so that they could be included in the group known as 'white people.'¹⁴ Other studies perceive Asian Americans' self-identification with being white mostly as a teenager phenomenon, though it can be observed among adults. In fact, some scholars report that many native-born Asian Americans consider themselves American when they are children, but increasingly adopt the ethnic identity of their parents, as they grow older (Sang-Hoon Kim 1996: 143-148; Elaine Kim and Eui-Young Yu 1996; Hung Thai 1999).

Finally, I would like to mention that different sources of prejudice and discrimination against Koreans in each country affected their choice of partners: with which minority group they should make alliances in each society. In a racially divided American society where phenotype and skin color matter, Koreans are often aggregated with other Asian groups and have developed panethnic alliances along racial lines. This makes for a stark contrast to the case in Japan, in which Zainichi Koreans have developed alliances with the Burakumin (former untouchables and ethnically Japanese) in the struggle against their common historically lowly origins imposed by the Japanese state and society, despite the presence of the Chinese, who shared the same experience of deportation and forced labor.

Table 4: Contextual Factors at the Societal Level

	ZAINICHI KOREANS	US KOREANS
<u>Context of Reception</u>	Unfavorable	Neutral/Unfavorable
Pattern of Race and Ethnic Relations	'Homogeneity' - Invisible	Ethnic/ Racial Mosaics - Visible
Sources of Prejudice and Discrimination	Lack of Japanese Blood (-) Historically Lowly Origin (-)	Race (distinct) (-) Econ. Status (relatively high) (+)
Mobilization of Ethnic Resources	Publicly Hindered	Publicly Acceptable
<u>Outcomes</u>		
Self-Perception	Negative Self-Esteem	Positive Self-Esteem
Survival Strategies	Avoidance Strategies Impersonation to Japanese	Selective Retention of Ethnic Culture Redefining 'Whiteness'
Intergroup Alliance	w/ Untouchables	w/ Other Asians

To sum up, Table 4 presents the relationship between the contextual factors at the societal level and adaptation outcomes of Zainichi and US Koreans. The overall context of reception for US Koreans is neutral, which could be directed to an unfavorable context of reception from time to time. Being non-white in a racial society is certainly a disadvantage for US Koreans. However, there is an offset effect for them, due to living in a society where they can publicly mobilize their ethnic resources. In the case of Zainichi Koreans, the context of reception at the societal level is consistently unfavorable. As a result, they have to hide their ethnic origin and impersonate the Japanese by developing various avoidance strategies.

Conclusion

Very different experiences await Koreans, depending on their destinations. Their adaptation is neither predetermined by their cultural resources, nor is a similar adaptation inevitable within a single ethnic group. The comparison of Korean diasporic groups in Japan and the US shows that racial and cultural similarities between the dominant and minority groups do not necessarily guarantee smooth social passing or integration into the host country. While Koreans in Japan and the US are both racialized by the mainstream, different conceptualizations of 'race' by the Japanese state and the American state in relation to nationhood resulted in the different formation of collective identities of Korean diasporic groups. Zainichi Koreans are racialized by not having Japanese blood, while US Koreans are racialized by not being white Caucasian. This comparison shows that 'race' can be fabricated by

the state or the dominant group even when the phenotype and skin color of the dominant and minority groups are similar.

Moreover, this cross-national comparison of the Korean diaspora in Japan and the United States suggests that what matters most for immigrants' integration is not their particular cultural background or racial similarity to the dominant group, but the way they are received by the host state and other institutions. The mode of incorporation plays a decisive role in determining the fates of these Korean immigrant groups, sometimes to the extent that it can nullify the advantages of immigrants' human capital. Thus, deciphering the combination of the contextual factors is critically important in the analysis of immigrant adaptation.

ENDNOTES

- 1 In my book, I compare three Korean diasporic groups in Japan and the United States: 1) old-comer Koreans in Japan (Zainichi Koreans) who were forcibly brought to Japan during the colonial period, and their descendants, 2) US Koreans who came to America after the 1965 Immigration Act and for economic betterment, and 3) newcomer Koreans in Japan (Tainichi Koreans) who came after the 1980s in search of better economic opportunities. I found a stark contrast in adaptation between old-comer Koreans in Japan and US Koreans. As the contexts of reception in Japan changed, some aspects of adaptation of newcomer Koreans in Japan have also changed. For instance, different contextual factors between old- and newcomer Koreans let them construct different types of ethnic communities in Japan: the former is associational and the latter is the set of mini ethnic-enclaves that came to have similar institutional arrangements to those of US Korean communities.
- 2 During my fieldwork (1998-2005), Koreans were the largest foreign group in Japan. As of the end of 2007, the largest foreign group in Japan became the Chinese, who make up 28.2 percent of all registered foreign residents in Japan. This number includes those who came from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Koreans are now in second place (27.6 percent). See statistical data issued by the Ministry of Justice, Japan, <<http://www.moj.go.jp/PRESS/080601-1.pdf>>.
- 3 Although the adoption of an Anglo-Saxon-sounding name could be regarded as one indicator of assimilation of US Koreans, the use of the Japanese name among Zainichi Koreans is not a simple reflection of voluntary assimilation. It has to do more with the name-changing campaign (*sōshi kaimei*) under the Japanese colonial regime in which Koreans were pressured to change their Korean names into the Japanese style. In contemporary Japan, it is said that the majority of Zainichi Koreans use the Japanese name in order to avoid discrimination.
- 4 1999 statistics from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, South Korea.
- 5 Since a majority of Zainichi Koreans hide their ethnic origin in order to avoid discrimination in Japanese society and ‘impersonate’ the Japanese, it was difficult to find ‘ordinary’ Zainichi Koreans who were willing to expose their ethnic origin and answer my questions. In fact, to find Zainichi who were willing to answer my questions was the most difficult part of my study. In my case, I chose two Zainichi Koreans initially who did not know each other and who never appeared in mass

media as Zainichi Koreans. Then, I made them the first respondents of the two chains of snowball sampling.

- 6 Portes and Rumbaut (1996/2006) also discussed the mode of incorporation and emphasized the importance in analyzing contexts of reception at the state, societal and ethnic community levels. There is a crucial difference between my model and their model. One of the major differences is that my model is specifically geared for international comparison of immigrant adaptation, while their model is primarily designed for domestic comparison.
- 7 In this paper, for analytical purposes, I emphasize two diametrically-opposed ideological currents and conditions surrounding Zainichi and US Koreans, but it does not necessarily mean that I perceive the state as ideologically rigid and uniform *per se*. In fact, in my book I tried to illustrate how paradigmatic shifts in state ideology and policies within a country have affected the formation of Korean communities and their collective identity.
- 8 According to Blauner “[i]mmigrant groups enter a new territory or society voluntarily, though they may be pushed out of their old country by dire economic or political oppression. Colonized groups become part of a new society through force or violence; they are conquered, enslaved, or pressured into movement” (1972: 52). I use these categories as ideal types in the Weberian sense, specifically when I refer to groups; they do not necessarily represent the exact situations of individual migrants and their un-naturalized descendants. For instance, among Zainichi Koreans who were forcibly brought to Japan during WWII, it is said that not a small number of people repatriated to their homeland right after Japan’s defeat in the war and came back to Japan soon after due to the loss of their economic foundations in their homeland. These Zainichi Korean individuals, in a strict sense, are not colonized migrants because their second migration was not by force. However, I classify Zainichi Koreans as a colonized migrant group whose former/ancestral status is still a concern for the Japanese state and society.
- 9 The unique Japanese culture was dependent upon a racialized understanding of self, since the Japanese express the ‘immutable’ or ‘natural’ aspect of Japanese identity through the imagined concept of ‘Japanese blood’ (Yoshino 1992; 1997). Conversely, others are categorized on the basis of their non-Japanese blood, regardless of quantity. Japanese blood lineage is the mobilizing symbol of superiority and the legitimizing authority, and is simultaneously available to all Japanese and denied to those deemed unfit.
- 10 For a closer analysis of the typologies of the Japanese and non-Japanese, refer to Fukuoka (2000: xxx).

- 11 On the contrary, manipulating Japaneseness by expanding cultural spheres, the Japanese state can include a larger population as part of the Japanese nation and establish its rule by making them “second-class” Japanese. For instance, the inclusion of Koreans into Japanese nationality during the colonial period is a good example of this (Suzuki 2003).
- 12 Hurh and Kim conceptualized ‘adhesive adaptation’ as a particular mode of adaptation in which certain aspects of the new culture and social relations with members of the host society are added on to the immigrants’ traditional culture and social networks, without replacing or modifying any significant part of the old (1983: 188).
- 13 According to the conventional assimilation model, Koreans are assimilating to American society, in which a cultural loss is replaced by American culture. Hurh and Kim argue “Certain aspects of American culture and social relations are added on Korean immigrants’ traditional culture and networks. The immigrants’ strong pervasive ethnic attachment is largely unaffected by their length of residence in the US, socioeconomic status and sociocultural assimilation rates” (1983: 208). This kind of adaptation seems to be a transitory stage toward Anglo-conformity. However, Hurh and Kim maintain that it is not a transitory adaptation; rather it is “a distinctive analytical category (another ideal type of ethnic adaptation) as long as immigrants and their posterity continue to experience only a limited degree of structural assimilation and maintain strong ethnic attachment” (1983: 208). Their subjects of research were all first-generation Koreans who also lived in the Los Angeles area; therefore, it could be possible to regard this as Koreans’ adaptation observed in an ethnic enclave.
- 14 While redefining “whiteness” without mentioning phenotype is a challenge in contemporary American society, theoretically it is possible, as we can see in the technique of dominance employed by the Japanese state. In defining its nationhood, Japan manipulated multiple racial signifiers and effectively selected and hierarchized them in order to justify and authorize the rule of the dominant Japanese (Suzuki 2003). This technique of dominance, which is a highly selective mobilization of racial signifiers, can be observed even in American history. Immense socio-economic and political changes, especially changes in sources of immigrants, profoundly challenged older versions of American national identity, and forced the American state to reevaluate what it meant ‘to be American’ and ‘White’ (Jacobson 1999; King 2002). The American state has created and guarded its integrity by inventing new racial ideologies in order to deal with changing surroundings, and explored a new political and cultural balance for its national interests. Phenotype remains a dominant racial signifier in the United States and whiteness continues to be a source of power. Nonetheless, the emergence of occupationally/economically successful Asian Americans who assert their ‘whiteness’ challenges the current racial codification in the

United States in which the construction of American identity is predominantly defined by white skin color. At the same time, however, such reasoning is an affirmation of racism, by transferring their experiences of discrimination onto others. It is ironic that, whereas progressive Zainichi Koreans (who have become thoroughly acculturated and have passed into Japanese society at the phenotypical level) assert their wish to be treated as equals by remaining ethnic Koreans, the new, successful US Koreans—despite their phenotypical hyper-visibility—are attempting to become white by redefining whiteness.

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