

# An Analysis of Latino-Korean Relations in the Workplace: Latino Perspectives in the Aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest

Kyeyoung Park

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## An Analysis of Latino-Korean Relations in the Workplace:

Latino Perspectives in the Aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest

Kyeyoung Park

Mainstream interpretations of the 1992 Los Angeles unrest had little to say about Mexicans or Central Americans. Instead, TV commentators honed in on black-Korean tensions while neglecting Latino-Korean relations. As Jinah Kim points out, overemphasis on the subjugation of black subjectivity “overshadows other systematic diagnoses of the civil unrest and places the focus on blackness as the object of, and solution to, social discord; African Americans remain America’s (race) victims and America’s (race) solution.”<sup>1</sup> Though largely portrayed in the national media as a black uprising, the 1992 unrest inarguably involved many Latinos.<sup>2</sup> Latinos were a near majority (approximately 49 percent) in the neighborhoods most affected by the unrest: South Central, Koreatown, and Pico Union.<sup>3</sup> From a total of 5,633 arrests, “51 percent of those arrested were Latino; 30 percent of those who died were Latino”;<sup>4</sup> more than 12 percent of the damaged businesses were Latino owned.<sup>5</sup> A third of the Latinos arrested were turned over to the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) and processed for deportation.<sup>6</sup> In the predominantly Central American Pico Union area, outsider-owned stores, particularly those owned and operated by Korean Americans, were looted and destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

Economic factors played an important role in the pattern of violence and property damage: in the areas where damage occurred, poverty and unemployment were twice as high, while

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KYEYOUNG PARK is associate professor of Anthropology and Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her book, *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City* (1997), published by Cornell University Press, was the winner of the 1998 Outstanding Book Award in History and Social Science from the Association for Asian American Studies.

per capita income and home ownership were half as much as the rest of Los Angeles. According to economist Manuel Pastor, these figures were related to the rapid growth of the Latino underclass. In Los Angeles, the number of Latino families falling below the poverty line was three times higher than that of non-Latino families. In 1989, the per capita income for Latinos in Los Angeles was \$7,111, less than half the city's average. For Latinos living in South Central L.A., the figure was much lower at \$4,461.<sup>8</sup>

This paper theorizes Latino-Korean relations. Most studies examined Latino-Korean relations from the Korean immigrant merchants' point of view. For some time, scholarly discussion on Latino-Korean relations did not progress beyond identifying cultural similarities between the two groups, though it has been considerably strengthened by recent scholarly interest in post-unrest multiracial coalition building.<sup>9</sup> Cultural similarities, per se, cannot explain social relations between groups. Nor is black-Korean tension rooted in their cultural differences, but rather connected by their divergent sociopolitical experiences in the United States and their countries of origin.

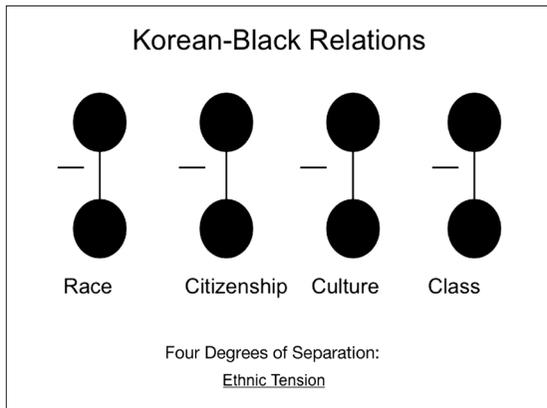
I frame the comparison of their differential experiences around the defining axes of inequality in the U.S.: race, citizenship, class, and culture. I examine how these axes of inequality impact racial minorities and their relationship with other minority groups. Black-Korean tensions are interpenetrated by the four social categories of race, class, citizenship, and culture, or four degrees of exclusion or divergence. Race and racism can refer to anti-black and anti-Korean prejudices as well as white racism (e.g., racism in the criminal justice system, by financial institutions, in educational settings, and through media representations) in the development of black-Korean tensions. Both blacks and Koreans have differential access to these public and political spheres, which led to Korean immigrant merchants suffering significant losses from the unrest and boycotts, while African Americans continue to experience institutional racism in such spheres. For instance, the sentence for Korean grocer Soon Ja Du—shaped as it was by race and class—for the shooting of 15-year-old Latasha Harlins sparked a black boycott of Korean-owned stores, which served as a reminder of the salience of anti-black racism (and classism) and how it greatly contributed to black-Korean tensions and the unrest.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, class plays an equally critical role in Korean-black encounters between middle-class immigrant merchants and the inner city poor who have been negatively impacted by

urban restructuring and immigration. Although Korean immigrant merchants are self-employed and are not capitalists in the traditional sense, African American customers complain about their quasi-class relations: they experience exploitation, domination, and surveillance, as well as having access only to high-priced, low-quality goods and enduring poor treatment from the merchants. While Korean immigrants may appeal to a merchant logic rooted in a pre-capitalist mode of production, African American customers turn to a moral economy, protesting the exploitation by merchants who accumulate profits.

In addition, these inner-city African Americans contest the full membership—citizenship—of recently immigrated Koreans in the U.S. nation-state. Despite the fact that many Korean immigrants are U.S. citizens or legal residents, they appear to be “sojourners” or un-American, and are therefore perceived to lack a commitment to the community and appear to reap rewards too soon, without sufficient suffering or struggle.

Finally, culture, in the form of business practices, seems to consolidate various factors and further contribute to the politicization of the tension. Thus, the tension often appears to be a matter of unbridgeable cultural difference. In short, complex urban problems, which have haunted the inner city for some time, have been reduced to conflicts of culture, read reductively through race.



I argue that the different position of Latinos and Koreans in relation to U.S. racial hegemony, capitalism, and national identity tends to create socio-political barriers and obstruct an otherwise meaningful social relationship. What emerged in my interviewees’ narra-

tives is the recognition of the pivotal role of class and culture, rather than race and citizenship, in the development of Latino-Korean relations. Latino-Korean relations also reflect aspects of patron-client relationships as found in Latin America, testifying to a dependent, symbiotic, yet exploitative cross-status nature.

Drawing upon a larger project on the 1992 unrest and the shifting racial relations in its aftermath, I examine how Latinos interact with Koreans, how they interpret such encounters, and, more importantly, what the implications of these interpretations are for understanding race/ethnicity, citizenship, class, and culture. With a premise that the unrest, an extreme case of ethnic conflict, was a major turning point in racial relations in Los Angeles, I first identify Latino-Korean relations as labor relations. Second, I examine the connection between the unrest and labor relations. Third, I discuss the importance of this link for interethnic relations, such as the case of post-unrest Latino-Korean labor organizing. I end by analyzing Latino-Korean relations with specific reference to analytical categories such as race/ethnicity, citizenship, class, and culture.

My earlier work provided a reference point for Latino-Korean encounters, from the perspective of Korean immigrant merchants in South Central.<sup>11</sup> Latino responses are analyzed in relation to historical and structural concepts such as racial ideology, the racialization process, class location, immigration, and citizenship, as well as notions of interracial social relationships. Special attention is given to public spaces where Latinos interact with Korean immigrants, including store counters, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, churches, and parks. Complementary interview narratives were obtained through grassroots community organizations.<sup>12</sup> This study was not necessarily designed on the most updated research on interethnic relations, as much as their experience of and response to the 1992 unrest.<sup>13</sup> Despite these limitations, this study provides an important glimpse into the state of Latinos working for Korean immigrant employers in the aftermath. In short, I am searching for explanatory material for changing dynamics and relationships, but not individual opinions or attitudes. To date, no previous studies have explored how Latino clients—employees, schoolmates, or neighbors—of Korean immigrant merchants experienced the unrest.

#### “Hidden Conflict”

Since the 1970s, Korean merchants have employed Mexican workers in Los Angeles as an alternative to co-ethnic labor, which

is less available and costly.<sup>14</sup> This shift to labor outside the ethnic group has also been observed among other immigrant groups with high rates of self-employment.<sup>15</sup> Korean immigrants still have a greater dependence on Latino workers (38 percent) than either Chinese or Indian immigrant merchants (15 percent, respectively).<sup>16</sup> As reported earlier, before the 1992 unrest, Korean businesses in South Central depended on Latino employees (39 percent) more than black employees (31 percent).<sup>17</sup>

Building on Lucie Cheng and Yen Le Espiritu's "immigrant hypothesis,"<sup>18</sup> Edward Chang and Jeanette Diaz-Veizades wrote that "the Latino immigrants in Pico Union that we surveyed generally admired the Koreans' work ethic and wanted to emulate them. . . these perceptions may explain the lack of ethnic conflict between Latinos and Korean Americans. In addition, many Latinos believe that Korean Americans have a 'positive' impact on their neighborhoods because Korean-owned businesses provide employment opportunities for Latino immigrants."<sup>19</sup> However, Chang and Diaz-Veizades were unable to explain "the apparent disparity between the immigrant hypothesis that suggested the positive relations between Korean and Latino immigrants and the participation of Latin American immigrants in looting Korean stores during the unrest."<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, there may be no causal relationship between Latinos looting Korean stores and Latino views on Koreans. First of all, post-unrest studies on Latino-Korean relations cannot explain how Latino views of Koreans influenced their looting Korean stores. Secondly, despite having some positive views, Latinos could have still simultaneously participated in the looting of Korean stores. Thirdly, it is also possible that few Latino interviewees might have looted Korean stores. Indeed, despite the low percentage of African Americans who expressed support of the black boycott of Korean stores, black-Korean tensions did develop. Thus, I examine both positive and negative Latino commentary on Koreans, acknowledging that the relationship between Latinos and Koreans could be both respectful and contentious at the same time.

Pyong Gap Min attributed the positive aspects of these relations to a number of factors: cultural similarities and mutual benefits derived from the employer-employee relationships; Korean American community organizations' establishment of cultural, social, and organizational linkages; and the provision of services to Latino immigrant workers and Latino children. He reported strong personal ties between Korean merchants and Latino em-

ployees, and how, for instance, the former have informally helped the latter, sometimes sponsoring their application for green cards, for instance.<sup>21</sup>

However, partly due to such campaigns as the “Hotel Workers Justice Campaign,” “Restaurant Workers Justice Campaign” and “Supermarket Workers Justice Campaign” by the Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA), an increasing number of Latino employees have complained about unfair or unlawful treatment to government agencies and have filed lawsuits. Korean business owners usually depend on co-ethnic workers for managerial, supervisory, professional, office, or sales positions, using Latino workers for various back-breaking low-wage jobs such as dish-washing, cooking, ironing, garment manufacturing, stocking retail items, cleaning, painting, moving, and construction work. On the other hand, Latinos were increasingly given managerial positions starting in the late 1990s. If cultural similarity is attributed as a reason why Koreans hire Latinos, then why is there an ethno-racial division of labor and hierarchy in these workplaces, and why did that relationship gradually shift?

Conversely, Larry Bobo and his associates reported a “hidden conflict” between Latinos and Koreans and speculated that such tensions probably accounted for the level of violence directed at Korean merchants and businesses during the 1992 unrest. According to their focus group study, Latinos harbored the same grievances against Korean merchants and business owners as did blacks, and also reported problems in employer-employee interactions, in co-worker relations, and in neighborhood settings with Koreans.<sup>22</sup>

Cultural similarity may not be sufficient to nurture a relationship between Latinos and Koreans, just as cultural similarity between blacks and Koreans did not stop ethnic tension, either. Keep in mind, too, that Korean employers and Latino employees represent a small percentage of each ethnic group, respectively. This discourse on cultural similarity needs to be understood as an ideology or politics of similarity, rather than a direct indicator of similarity. It is more likely that Korean immigrant employers would invoke and appeal to aspects of cultural similarity than Latino workers. Accordingly, the invocation of cultural similarities works favorably for Korean immigrants and prods Latinos to see past inequalities between them.

It may be more productive to look to the level of social structure or relation, where they are clearly interdependent and symbiotic: one relationship of particular interest is the patron-client relation

between Korean employers and Latino employees, which might represent neo-feudal relations through which “patrons” gain the support of “clients” through the mutual exchange of benefits and obligations. Despite different racial and immigration dynamics, the Latin American patron-client relation has been reproduced in some segments of the Mexican American community, according to some researchers. Octavio Ignacio Romano, for instance, has reported in his research that white business owners had functioned largely in the role of patron in rural Mexican American communities in South Texas during 1950s, much in the same manner as counterparts in Latin America. More recently, Rachel Adler has examined in her 2002 study how traditional patterns of patron-client ties initially found in Yucatan and throughout Mesoamerica have been adapted to fit transnational circumstances, as migrants establish and participate in patron-client relationships to achieve their goals and pursue their life projects in Dallas, Texas.<sup>23</sup> Latino workers appear to use forms of patron-client relations as a strategy for negotiating terms of employment. Unable to follow the model of unionized labor, Latino workers might fall back on the alternative strategy of a traditional patron-client labor model in Mexico and Central America.

As Roger Waldinger and Michael Lichter have noted, employers in Los Angeles, including Korean immigrant employers, who hire low-wage workers, prefer to hire newly arrived immigrants mostly because of their “personal qualifications—friendliness, enthusiasm, smiling, and subservience.”<sup>24</sup> Unlike white and African American workers, who are fully aware of their rights to fair labor standards and practices, Mexican workers approach their Korean employers as clients, exhibiting a particular form of social relationship between employer and employee. Korean employers, patrons in this case, perform favors by granting gifts, credit, loans, assistance with immigration registration, income tax, social security applications, green cards, housing loans, and providing personal recommendations. However, Korean immigrant employers mistake Mexican employees’ friendliness for affection. When the patron-client relationship is not productive for Mexican workers, they may choose to participate in looting Korean stores, as they may anticipate less reprisal from their Korean employers who are not a part of the establishment.<sup>25</sup>

### The Politics of Cultural Difference

My discussion on cultural similarity and difference is limited to the matter of economic and labor relations. Tables 1 and 2 sum-

marize Latino interviewees' opinions of Koreans. These views do not represent the entire Latino group, but instead those of new immigrants in South Central, from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, who have encountered Korean immigrants in various capacities. In Los Angeles, where Latinos represent nearly half of the city's population, there is economic diversity; Latinos include immigrant and native-born Mexicans of the working and middle classes, *barrio* dwellers, and Central Americans of Pico Union and South L.A.

Some similarities to the Korean immigrant and Korean American population include the high proportion of foreign-born subjects who struggle with English. This not only limits their ability to communicate, but also impedes their participation in the political process and integration into mainstream society. Equally important, both groups suffer from anti-immigrant sentiments and employment discrimination.<sup>26</sup>

Latino perceptions of Koreans as hard working resonate with how Americans view Mexicans or how Salvadorans view themselves. Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz, for instance, suggests that American stereotypes of Mexicans emphasize "religiosity, family orientation, and work ethic."<sup>27</sup> Similarly, according to Beth Baker-Cristales, "Salvadorans portray themselves as industrious workers, people who will do what it takes to earn a living, joking that they are the Japanese of Central America. Their nickname is 'guanaco,' meaning laborious, strong, [with the] stamina to toil like beasts of burden."<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, it is important to note that there are significant differences between Latinos and Korean/Asian Americans. Historically, individuals of Mexican origin have been treated "as formally white and informally non-white," as opposed to Asian immigrants and their children. Unlike Korean Americans, Mexicans have a history of territorial annexation, since they are indigenous to what is now called the southwestern U.S.

Having encountered political violence and human rights violations, the majority of Salvadorans and Guatemalans have come to the United States since the 1980s as part of a massive migration of Central Americans as a result of revolution and counterrevolution in Nicaragua, the economic devastation of the 1980-1992 civil war in El Salvador, and counterinsurgency in Guatemala.<sup>31</sup> Both Korean and Central American immigrants were subject to U.S. hegemony, in particular, military intervention, before immigration.<sup>32</sup>

Table 1. Latino Discourse on Koreans and Themselves:  
Similarities

immigrants
hard-working
disciplined
family-oriented <sup>29</sup>
religious and mystical <sup>30</sup>
eat spicy food
partygoers

Table 2. Latino Discourse on Koreans and Themselves:  
Differences

Koreans	Latinos
strong belief in the American Dream	weaker belief in the American Dream
know and take advantage of the system	ambivalent toward the system
highly motivated	conformist
emphasize education and business	emphasize employment and work
business owners or middle class	working poor or middle class
mercenary	not greedy
suspicious of Latinos' shoplifting	not suspicious of Koreans
united	divided
friendly to fellow Koreans	not as friendly to fellow Latinos
lacking "high culture"	long intellectual tradition
wimpy	not wimpy
bad driver	better driver

The differences represented in Table 2 reflect many elements of stereotyping. Stereotypes mark gross generalizations and ignore diversity not only among different groups, but also within a group.<sup>33</sup> Some aspects simply reflect the larger society's dominant view of Koreans, while other criticisms of the Korean immigrant community are based on unique Latino observations. It should be noted that stereotypes often place Latinos at a lower socioeconomic status when compared to the higher socioeconomic status of Asians.<sup>34</sup> Latinos also continue to enter largely as temporary laborers ineligible for citizenship.<sup>35</sup>

These differences should be understood within a particular comparative context. For instance, although both Koreans and Latinos believe in the American dream, Latinos think that Koreans have

a firmer and almost more naïve belief in it than they do. Regarding education and employment, Latinos feel that, while Koreans can afford to make education a priority, they cannot.<sup>36</sup> This sentiment does not mean that Latinos place little value on education, however.

Like my African American interviewees, my Latino interviewees pointed out cohesiveness and cultural retention among Korean immigrants. The concept of culture is broad and often misunderstood; however, my discussion is limited to the particular way my Latino interviewees relate to traits as markers of difference; in other words, they recognized culture in terms of what worked or functioned. This discourse on cultural difference also needs to be understood as a politics of difference rather than a direct indicator of difference. For instance, interviewees Raul, Teresa, and Silvia, who are social workers at the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), identified both similarities and differences between Latinos and Koreans<sup>37</sup>:

*On similarities:* We are both hard working, we are both immigrants, and we came here for the same purpose—to improve ourselves. We also face the same discrimination because of language barriers and because we are both ethnic minorities.

*On being from immigrant groups:* We have the same point of reference while blacks do not. Another similarity is that we are both family oriented.

*On differences:* Koreans stress education. We Latinos just stress working hard. After high school, many Korean parents stress their children to continue with the education.

*On differences in communication style:* Koreans learn and try to speak Spanish, they try to penetrate us and we don't. They are penetrating us, they learn to speak our language and they own the businesses in our community, and we do not have much control or leverage towards Koreans. On the other hand, Latinos are more open and try to interact more with others but Koreans are not.

Miguel, a 28-year-old who is on the staff of the non-profit immigrant support organization *El Rescate*, had a similar take on Korean immigrants and their culture<sup>38</sup>:

Q: How are Koreans and how do you characterize them and their culture?

A: They look too tough, face too tough, serious. I don't see them happy, not at all. And they just want to be with their own, no Latinos, no blacks. . .

Q: How do you characterize yourself?

A: Open minded, and disposed to learn other cultures.

Q: How are they similar or different from you and your culture?

A: No similarity. Latinos, we are too crazy, easy going. We love dancing, singing and partying too much. But Koreans are too serious.

Paula, a 25-year-old, second-generation Mexican American female who works as a sales assistant, put it bluntly:

There are no similarities between Koreans and Latinos. Koreans are greedy for money. They are not conformist like we are, which is good. Most of the owners of stores are Koreans, who are very rude and they have a funny body odor. They are not trustworthy. I had a cousin that worked for a Korean and he had a very bad experience with them. They didn't treat him right.

Although Mexican Americans themselves claim traits such as family rapport and cultural maintenance that can also be ascribed to Koreans,<sup>39</sup> a number of Mexican Americans I spoke with attributed the success of Korean immigrants in business to their mobilization of their culture and social relations. At the same time, Latino interviewees like Melvin, a 45-year-old Salvadoran pastor, were not defensive at all and were critical of the Latino community:

Q: How do you characterize the Korean culture?

A: I don't know much about the Korean culture, but I think it's good. They maintain their language, customs, they help each other out. . . The difference is that Latinos aren't like that. Latinos don't have that unity and they don't help each other. Koreans are always helping each other.

According to Chang and Diaz-Veizades, Central Americans' belief that Asians are able to run more profitable business establishments is because of the perception that they buy cooperatively, which might be translated into the admiration of Latino respondents for the "unity" they see in the Korean community.<sup>40</sup>

Jaime, an unemployed Salvadoran male who had one Korean boss, said he never had a problem with him. He worked at a Korean restaurant doing maintenance work and also helped out in the kitchen. He had positive views of his former Korean employer and Korean culture, though he resented the Koreans' suspicion of Latinos as criminals:

Q: How would you characterize the Korean culture? Who are they?

A: Well, I never see them getting drunk on the streets or doing bad stuff.

Q: How about the culture?

A: Well, there are some differences. When someone passes by, Koreans don't say hi or anything. They don't really care. . . They take care of their own business and that's it. . . To make matters worse, when a Latino is walking around near their home, they don't like it because they are suspicious and think that we are criminals.

In brief, the cultural argument reflected issues relating to economics and differences in class relations: As one respondent put it vividly, "They became successful owing to their magical culture." Latino interviewees also invoked cultural difference rhetorically as a way to problematize the normalized segmentation of jobs and ethnic hierarchies in workplaces. Only when such cultural differences were combined with different historical experiences and exacerbated by conflicting class/race relations did they become problematic.

### Labor Relations

The multivalent encounters between Latinos and Korean immigrants have produced a more complex dynamic than has been observed with black-Korean relations. For instance, a few of the respondents have excellent relationships with their Korean employers, fellow employees, and merchants. Victor, a 33-year-old Salvadoran mechanic, has worked in the same Korean-owned gas station and mechanic shop since coming to the U.S. fifteen years ago:

I am well treated here. There are six workers, three Koreans and three Latinos. My immediate supervisor is Korean. I am on good relations with both Korean employer and employees. I am well treated, and they are good friends. Eighty percent of my friends are Koreans, good relations with them.

When he was asked to comment on his interaction with Korean merchants:

For me all has been good. It has been good, same, all the time. Never had any problems with Korean merchants. I always go to places I know, the merchants are like friends, and I am treated very well, same all the time.

However, a good number of Latino interviewees complained about merchant-customer relations like my African American interviewees, although they often provided a nuanced view of Korean merchants. Antonio, a 38-year-old Honduran who does glasswork, shared that he set out to understand why Korean merchants had to watch and suspect inner city customers, even though his own experience with Korean merchants was neutral:

I think Korean merchants have a hard time, they don't trust people and they can't trust, too many theft in the store, too many thieves around. . . look, if you got the money, there is no problem. My experience with them is neither bad nor good. The problem is money, not the merchants.

Julio, a 40-year-old *El Rescate* staff member, attributed the problem with the Korean merchants to cultural misunderstanding, but stressed that problem is limited to some Korean-owned stores. He also urged both Koreans and Latinos to understand each other's culture:

Not bad. Overall, interaction with Korean merchants is fine. Occasionally, though, unpleasant things happen due to misunderstandings. Merchants can be perceived as not very friendly. Koreans have to understand us better, our culture, but we also have to understand better their Korean culture as well.

Despite negative experiences with Korean merchants, the multivalent encounters that Latinos have with Korean immigrants in many different social settings substantially diversified their understanding of Korean immigrants. My interview with three CARECEN social workers, who all had Korean friends at their schools, reflected the ambivalent nature of Latino-Korean relationships. For one respondent Raul, these relations were "*nada malo* [not bad] and *nada bueno* [not good]." Two other interviewees, Teresa and Silvia, also said there were good and bad aspects to the Korean merchants. Although she remembered the terribly violent treatment of her aunt by a Korean merchant, Silvia balanced her assessment by complimenting the efforts made by Korean merchants:

A bad thing about them is that they are suspicious, they follow you around, and it is not a pleasant encounter. For instance, one time my [Silvia] aunt's blouse was ripped off because a merchant thought she was hiding something inside her clothes and tried to grab it and ripped off her blouse. She came home and

told the story, so we did not get a good view of the merchants.

But one good thing we notice about the Koreans is that they learn Spanish and go out of their way to speak to you in Spanish—this makes us feel good, because it makes us more intimate with them and shows that they value us as their customers.

Some have had amicable relationships with their Korean employers. Alfredo, a 37-year-old Mexican male, is in charge of building maintenance, repair, and security for a Korean-owned building, and feels well respected by his Korean employer:

My Korean employer, Mr. Kang, treats me well. There are five workers: two Koreans, two Latinos, and one European. I don't make enough money, I barely survive with what I earn. . . . One of my Korean friends is my former apartment manager/owner. Even several years have passed since I moved out, but he is still my friend, we have good friendship.

On the other hand, there are those who have had a less than satisfactory relationship with their Korean employers. Most low-wage workers do not receive health insurance, paid vacations, and/or sick leave, because there is no legislation requiring employers to provide such benefits to their employees.<sup>41</sup> Aurora, a 48-year-old Mexican woman who works for a Korean market, identified low wages and lack of benefits and vacation as the source of interracial tension. When she once missed a workday due to illness, she was told her wages would be deducted or her employment would be terminated. In fear of termination, many of these workers are unable to adequately recover when an illness occurs. Interestingly enough, she also criticized the Latino community, in particular Latino employers, for paying less and discriminating against fellow Latinos.

Q: What is your experience about Korean business owner?

A: It's good. I haven't had any big problem with them.

Q: How are they as your boss or coworker?

A: They don't demand too much from you as long as you're responsible. They treat me pretty well. It's just too much work that never ends

Q: How are your working conditions?

A: Work is good. The thing is that we don't get vacations, and even if we did, it would not be paid. We don't get any kind of benefits, including medical. Can I ask you a question? What is the current minimum wage?

Q: I believe it's \$5.25.

A: My boss only pays me \$5.00 an hour. I have never missed work, even one day, for the past four years of working for him. Last month, I fell and couldn't use my right leg. I missed work for a week, but I don't think my boss is going to pay me for the missed week.

Q: How do you feel about the Latino community?

A: I believe it's very selfish and egotistic. . . . Latino business owners pay less and discriminate against their own people. . .

Juan, a Mexican pastor, shared this grievance. There are 15 people whose employers were Koreans who attend his church. He noted that it took time for Latino workers to feel more comfortable with Korean employers.

Q: How are the working conditions?

A: Some are good, but others are bad. They don't get any benefits. The place of work is usually clean and well ventilated. If you compare Korean bosses with Chinese bosses, Koreans are better. Chinese are harsher. . .

Q: How are Koreans as fellow workers?

A: In the beginning, they yell a lot. I knew one Korean lady who used to give a hard time to this one person I knew because she would yell in front of all the customers. But now that my friend has been working there for a while, things are better. . . Another thing about Koreans is that they don't like giving raise, almost never. And when the Latino workers quit their jobs because of the low wage, the Korean employers just go find another Latino worker who is willing to work for the same low wage.

Although Latinos interact with Korean immigrants in diverse settings, their interaction at the workplace is centered on employer-employee relations. Accordingly, workplace disputes are often the source of tensions. For example, Miguel affirmed the presence of class tension between Koreans and Latin Americans: "Yes, there are differences. Economic differences—Koreans are employers and we Latinos their employees. We are under them, and they are above us. This is not a racial tension; it is strictly a class tension."

The CARECEN social workers I interviewed summarized a couple of problems with Korean immigrants, liquor store controversies<sup>42</sup> and labor issues:

On two issues or cases, we can say there is some tension. One is the presence of liquor stores in the community. There are too many liquor stores in the neighborhood, mostly owned by Asians or Koreans. Around liquor stores, we see drug problems and drunkenness. Liquor stores give the neighborhood a bad image, and something has to be done about this.

The other problem is employer-employee relations. There are problems with workers' treatment; there are complaints about low pay and lack of recognition for their [Latinos] hard work. This problem is especially severe in the garment industry. This is economic or class tension, which is not racial. For other things, there is no problem between Koreans and Latinos.

Reflecting my interviewees' sentiments, the most common issue was wage and hour disputes among the 50 Korean and 77 Latinos workers surveyed by KIWA through their Worker Empowerment Clinic in 2005; of the 127 cases, 88 percent were wage and work hour disputes.<sup>43</sup> What was emerging in my interviewees' narratives is a recognition of the pivotal role of class and culture, rather than race and citizenship, in the development of Latino-Korean relations.

### The Unrest and Labor Relations

The Latino interviewees elaborated on their personal experiences with the unrest, which had much to do with their employment at Korean establishments. Some lost jobs, while others joined their Korean employers defending their stores. However, this may be a matter of just being present and defending the store, not necessarily a measure of loyalty. Take, for instance, the case of Antonio, who did glass work *en construction de edificio* (in building construction). For him, the aftermath was quite traumatic and he was under stress because he lost his job; at the time, he was working for a Korean business that was burned down. Antonio was worried financially as a result. During the riot, he stayed inside the house and spent several weeks desperate for another job.

Some Latinos were openly sympathetic with Korean immigrants and critical of the way the media portrayed Korean immigrants during the unrest. As one respondent explained, the media "portrayed Koreans as trigger happy, gun toting, and violent, but in reality all they were doing was defending their property. I would have done the same thing if I were in their shoes." The image of Korean store owners protecting their property with guns in the face of the LAPD's complete abdication of its respon-

sibility to protect the Korean community was such a powerful and positive image for my Latino interviewees. Julio shared his changed perception of Korean immigrants after the unrest:

We did not think or know that Koreans were so united. Koreans really defended their businesses well during the crisis. . . I thought Koreans just came here to live and better themselves, and as a rather passive people. Their sense of unity and toughness during the crisis changed my perceptions of Koreans.

Some of the respondents were disturbed with the negative image of Latinos as looters held by Koreans and other ethnicities. In particular, my Mexican male interviewees strongly disapproved Latino looting and felt it was morally wrong. Jose, a 41-year-old originally from Guadalajara who was unemployed at the time of interview, described the situation as disheartening because he felt that the people participating in the looting had no excuse. "There are other ways of protesting and that is not one of them. . . I lived it and the only word I can use to describe it is panic. I felt awful for my race because of what I saw in person and what I saw on television."

Interviewees, like Antonio, were glad to see Korean immigrant employers treat their Latino employees better in the aftermath:

Before the riot, the communication was not good. Koreans don't believe you, they don't believe, for instance, that I am capable of doing certain things. Koreans think Latinos don't have brains, that everybody is stupid. But this is not true, there are lots of Latinos who are smart, who go to college, etc.—not all Latinos are stupid. After the riot, since Koreans don't want that happen to them again, there seem to be more effort, better effort to communicate with Latinos, a more willingness to listen, and less willingness to dismiss us or ignore us. . .

In effect, being employed at Korean business establishments affected the way some Latinos experienced the unrest, producing sympathetic views of Korean immigrant merchants and an appreciation for the better treatment of Latino workers by Korean employers in the aftermath.

### Coming Together, Post-Unrest

According to Chang and Diaz-Veizades, "coalition building has emerged as the most viable option for Los Angeles's rebuilding process," after the 1992 unrest.<sup>44</sup> The implications of the link between the unrest and labor relations can be found in the post-1992

cross-racial class formations, in particular in the area of immigrant and labor organizing. For instance, in 1994, a coalition of Korean American organizations came to the aid of 575 hotel union workers—predominantly Latinos—who were in danger of losing their jobs had the Downtown Los Angeles Hilton changed management firms to Hanjin, a subsidiary of one of South Korea's biggest conglomerates and the parent company of Korean Air. KIWA was instrumental in enlisting the support of other Korean American organizations, leading demonstrations in front of the Korean Air terminal at Los Angeles International Airport,<sup>45</sup> the South Korean Consulate, and picketing at Hanjin's shipping business. In this case, KIWA succeeded in forging what Edward Park has called, "labor organizing beyond race and nation" by enlisting politicians, mainstream and ethnic media, and a number of community organizations, as well as forming a sense of transnational labor solidarity between Local 11 and Hanjin unions in South Korea. It is important to note, as Edward Park does, that "this campaign brought Latinos and Korean Americans together in universal terms of job security and corporate responsibility."<sup>46</sup>

There have been ongoing formalized efforts by KIWA to deal with common labor issues through the organization's advocacy of Latino and Korean/Asian hotel, garment, restaurant, and supermarket workers. KIWA's series of cross-racial coalition endeavors have continued to spark scholarly attention. As Angie Chung noted, KIWA has promoted "class solidarity across racial and ethnic boundaries as a matter of social justice."<sup>47</sup> For example, KIWA has formed coalitions with various local and national Latino organizations, such as the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights L.A. (CHIRLA), CARECEN, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), and international labor organizations like Enlace.<sup>48</sup> Latino organizations in Koreatown and the neighboring Pico Union area lacking specialized services would refer Latino workers to KIWA.<sup>49</sup> Although KIWA's stated goal has not been about improving race relations, their efforts have indeed significantly improved racial relations. As these coalitions suggest, racial equality may be hard to achieve without dismantling the class component that guides, shapes, and maintains many racial antagonisms.

Cross-racial labor organizing has provided Latinos with a broader range of experiences with Koreans, as they have discovered through relationships with Korean labor and community organizers who were committed to fight against Korean employers on behalf of

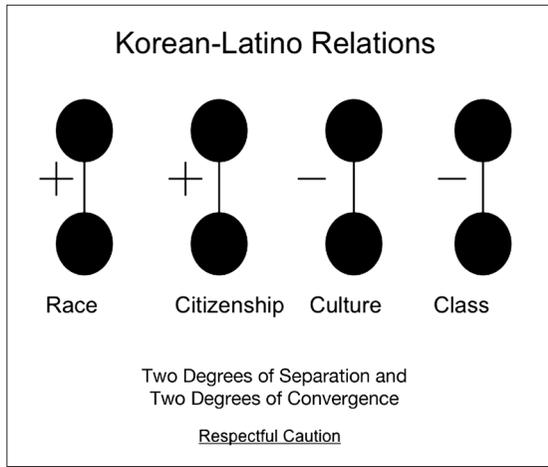
Latino workers. From my interviewees' responses, they have come to realize that bosses are bosses, having less to do with being Korean than structural positioning. Moreover, efforts like those of KIWA's have shown them that "Koreans" are not a monolithic group. As one interviewee puts it, "I couldn't believe how dead serious KIWA staff were committed to the Latino worker cause until they were arrested for protesting in front of the Korean Air at Los Angeles International Airport." KIWA's labor advocacy attracted attention from the Los Angeles Spanish-language newspaper *La Opinion*, which, for instance, reported that the non-profit organization helped eight Latino restaurant employees receive \$380,000 in compensation for non-paid work hours<sup>50</sup>; in addition, the paper covered KIWA's efforts to help 200 Latino garment and domestic workers demand protection against exploitation before the office of Governor Gray Davis<sup>51</sup> and the attempts of 40 Latino workers to petition for union recognition by the Korean immigrant supermarket chain Assi.<sup>52</sup>

### Latino-Korean Relations

Based on the ethnographic evidence above, Latino-Korean relations in Koreatown might be described as being separated by "two degrees of exclusion" in terms of class and culture, and, at the same time, "two degrees of inclusion (or convergence)" in terms of race and citizenship; see the figure on the next page. This four-factor model of degrees of exclusion and inclusion can be used in many situations to analyze minority-minority relations as to how the different racial groups are positioned in relation to the U.S. racial state, capitalist system, and national identity. That is, these axes of socio-cultural inequality contribute to create socio-political distance, which impacts interethnic dynamics. To some extent, there seems to be balance in Korean-Latino relations; however, that balance may be transformed for better or for worse. Largely depending on the nature of future bridging efforts, Latino-Korean relations might not develop into the tensions demonstrated in the black-Korean case. However, it is necessary for us to specify the different roles and positions played by different factors in each relationship.

To assess the role of race and racism in Latino-Korean relations, first of all, we should understand that both Latinos and Koreans are racialized in different ways from African Americans, and from each other. Many Latinos come from pluralistic, multiethnic societies of Latin American countries. My Latino interviewees did not turn to invalid genetically based racial explanation, but relied on an ethnic/national one in accounting for [Ko-

rean] behavioral difference. On the other hand, Koreans come from a more or less homogeneous society marked by some form of ethnocentric bias. Moreover, some Korean immigrants assess other ethnic groups based on their judgment of different capitalist economic development levels and how modernized their homelands are.



Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss how the “differential racialization” of Latinos and Koreans affected Latino-Korean relations, José Cobas, Jorge Duany, and Joe Feagin trace the U.S. racialization of Latin Americans to the mid-nineteenth century, when whites often referred to Mexicans as a “mongrel Spanish-Indian and Negro race.” One of the contemporary forms of racism has been nativist racism. Though the term “illegal alien” fails to identify immigrants of a particular nationality, at least in the southwest, the term stigmatizes undocumented Latinos, and plays off stereotypes about them as criminals. Moreover, Latinos are increasingly thought to have a particular physiognomy: olive/brown skin and dark, straight hair. The U.S. government, mass media, police, and other major institutions increasingly refer to “Hispanics” or “Latinos” as distinct from both non-Hispanic whites and blacks, hinting the racialization of Latin American immigrants and their children.<sup>53</sup> In relation to Latino-Korean relations in the workplace, however, race and racism has not created distances between these two groups. It is possible in the future “differential racialization” of Latinos and Koreans will create visible socio-political barriers between them.

The perceptions of Latinos as undocumented immigrants and co-operative workers add another dimension to the relationship. Mexican and Salvadoran immigrants and refugees tend to have more recently migrated to the U.S. than Koreans and, more importantly, hold temporary or undocumented status in more cases. Immigration status may be significant to the calculation of unpaid wages, while the inability to communicate in English makes many workers susceptible to exploitative employment conditions. Conversely, Nadia Kim's Korean American interviewees considered Latinos as more visible than Korean and Asian Americans, considering the greater population size of Latinos and their strong political and cultural influence.<sup>54</sup> However, in my research, this differential access to citizenship did not drive a wedge that would otherwise strain the relationship between Latinos and Koreans.

As discussed earlier, Latino-Korean relations are marked more by class and culture than race and citizenship. The class dynamics between the Korean immigrant petite bourgeoisie small business owners and Latino workers are central to this relationship. Most complaints about Korean immigrants by my Latino interviewees spoke to the issue of labor relations. Fortunately, there are more established channels (e.g., labor unions and community organizations such as KIWA) to deal with class-related problems, unlike the tension in merchant-customer relations between blacks and Koreans. Korean re-migrants from Latin America have also played a strategic role in Latino-Korean relations, with their Spanish language and cultural competence combined with empathy towards Latin American immigrants.<sup>55</sup> As Latinos came to experience Koreans not just as their employers, but also their advocates, they came to delink ethnic association from Korean employers.

Many Latinos were receptive toward other cultures, including Korean culture, and there appeared a genuine effort to avoid a racial argument and to adopt a cultural argument instead.<sup>56</sup> Both groups are coming from less developed or newly developed countries, where reciprocity is more prevalent as a mode of interaction than in advanced capitalist societies such as the U.S.<sup>57</sup>

Some Korean immigrant employers have developed a bond with their Latino employees, especially when they worked together for some time. Latino workers, particularly Mexicans, have worked for the same Korean employer anywhere from several years to a couple of decades, or even permanently. In these

multifaceted interactions between Korean and Latin American immigrants, they not only share cultural space by working together, but have developed close relationships through socializing and by aiding one another. In this way, the concept of culture, which originally played a negative role in Latino-Korean relations, transforms into a positive factor, although these cultural differences have at times produced varied forms of relations, depending on ethnic and national origins among Latinos.<sup>58</sup>

As I touched on earlier, I would argue that the bonding relationship between Korean employers and Latino workers is reminiscent of “patron-client” relations in Mexico and Latin America.<sup>59</sup> The groups have become interdependent and work symbiotically, since the patron needs the client as much as the client needs the patron. In other words, Latino workers prove themselves indispensable to Korean employers due to their long tenure and reliable work performance. In return, Korean employers provide advice, gifts, and loans, while socializing and guaranteeing employment. However, I agree with Howard Stein’s critique that, “While the patron-client relationship might be functional in the short run and at a superficial level of analysis, it is dysfunctional in the long run and at a deeper level of analysis.”<sup>60</sup> According to Stein, it is not merely a complementary role, but “a symbiosis in which a hierarchical superior/inferior or superordinate/subordinate structural relation masks an authoritarian/infantilizing one, irrespective of conscious intent.”<sup>61</sup> As a result, revolution or unrest could become a pragmatic way to deal with inequality.

Therefore, the Korean-Latino relations are matters of “respectful caution.” Many of my Latino interviewees encourage Koreans to get to know and mingle with them, thus demanding outreach efforts by Koreans toward the Latino community. Overall, though, there seems to be less “othering” and “racializing” in Latino-Korean relations than black-Korean relations.<sup>62</sup>

In brief, axes of inequality such as race, class, citizenship, and culture contribute in producing different interethnic dynamics for black-Korean relations and Latino-Korean relations, reflecting differential relationships to the U.S. nation-state and capitalist system via differential access to material and symbolic resources. Race, class, citizenship, and cultural differences disadvantage both Korean and Latino immigrants relative to the mainstream white population. Differences between the two groups as a result of their class relation and cultural difference

can often result in stereotypes propagated by each group about the other. It is these discourses on class relations and cultural matter that have played a central role in establishing differential categories of belonging, worthiness, and respectability.

## Notes

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1. Jinah Kim, "Immigrants, Racial Citizens, and the (Multi)Cultural Politics of Neoliberal Los Angeles," *Social Justice* 35:2 (2008): 36-56.
2. For heuristic purposes, I use the term Latino to indicate more recent immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, other parts of Central America, and Mexico. It does not imply the formation of pan-Latino, pan-ethnic identity among these recent immigrants from Latin American countries, although a pan-Latino movement did emerge in the aftermath of the uprising.
3. The Latinos who lived around Koreatown were mostly poor, non-English-speaking, recent immigrants to the U.S.
4. Manuel Pastor, "Latinos and the Los Angeles Uprising: The Economic Context" (Claremont: Tomas Rivera Center, 1993): 1.
5. Kathleen Tierney, "Property Damage and Violence: A Collective Behavior Analysis," Mark Baldassare, ed., *The Los Angeles Riots: Lessons for the Urban Future* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994): 153.
6. Pastor, 12.
7. Armando Navarro, "The South Central Los Angeles Eruption: A Latino Perspective," *Amerasia Journal* 19:2 (1993): 79.
8. Pastor, 6.
9. Lucie Cheng and Yen Lee Espiritu, "Korean Businesses in Black and Hispanic Neighborhood: A Study of Intergroup Relations," *Sociological Perspectives* 32 (1989): 521-534; Kyeyoung Park, "The Re-Invention of Affirmative Action: Korean Immigrants' Changing Conceptions of African Americans and Latin Americans," *Urban Anthropology & Studies of Cultural Systems & World Economic Development* 24:1/2 (1995): 59-92; In Jin Yoon, *On My Own: Korean Businesses and Race Relations in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Dae Young Kim, "Beyond Co-Ethnic Solidarity: Mexican and Ecuadorian Employment in Korean-Owned Businesses in New York City," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22:3 (May 1999): 581-605; Edward Chang and Jeanette Diaz-Veizades, *Ethnic Peace in the American City: Building Community in Los Angeles and Beyond* (New York: NYU Press, 1999); Edward Park, "Labor Organizing Beyond Race and Nation: The Los Angeles Hilton Case," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Research* 24: 7/8 (2004): 137-152; Pyong Gap Min, "Korean-Latino Relations in Los Angeles and New York," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 4 (2007): 395-411; Angie Chung, *Legacies of Struggle: Conflict and Cooperation in Korean American Politics* (Stanford:

Stanford University Press, 2007); Nadia Kim, *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race from Seoul to L.A.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

10. Kyeyoung Park, "Use and Abuse of Race and Culture: Black-Korean Tension in America," *American Anthropologist* 98:3 (1996): 492-499.
11. Kyeyoung Park, "The Re-Invention of Affirmative Action." See also Nadia Kim, 162-167.
12. Drawing upon observations, data, and 142 interviews gathered from 1992 to 1997, and 2002, this paper focuses on eighteen interviews with Latin American immigrants who have been the clientele at Korean-owned stores. In addition to in-depth interviews conducted from 1995-1997 and archival analysis (*La Opinion*, 1990-2001), I participated in many social events such as dinners, picnics, weddings, and graduation ceremonies. Interviews were carried out in Spanish. Nearly two-thirds of the interviewees were male and the rest were female, with the majority of the interviewees falling between 23 to 48 years of age. The year of immigration varied from 6 years to 23 years, including a couple of second generation Mexican Americans. The majority of interviewees were high school graduates, with a few with a college education and a few with an elementary education. This study makes no claim for generalizability based on a random or representative sample of Latino customers of Korean merchants. Analysis was aimed at identifying the breadth of interviewees' responses.
13. By now, South Central residents are removed from the activity of the unrest.
14. Dae Young Kim's study of Mexican and Ecuadorian employment in Korean-owned businesses demonstrated that the initial shift towards hiring Mexicans and Latinos in Korean-owned businesses in New York City was an attempt by Korean immigrant entrepreneurs to adapt to a diminishing supply of labor in the late 1980s.
15. *Ibid.*, 586.
16. Min, 399.
17. Kyeyoung Park, "The Re-Invention of Affirmative Action," 62.
18. Cheng and Espiritu, 531.
19. Chang and Diaz-Veizades, 102.
20. Leland Saito, "Ethnic Peace in the American City: Building Community in Los Angeles and Beyond (review)," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 4:1 (2001): 79.
21. Min, 402-404.
22. Lawrence Bobo, Camille Zubrinsky, James Johnson, and Raul Oliver, "Public Opinion Before and After a Spring of Discontent," Mark Baldassare, ed., *The Los Angeles Riots: Lessons for the Urban Future*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994): 103-134.
23. See Octavio Ignacio Romano, "Donship in a Mexican-American Community in Texas," *American Anthropologist* 62:6 (1960): 966-976; Rachel H. Adler, "Patron-Client Ties, Ethnic Entrepreneurship And Transnational Migration: The Case Of Yucatecans In Dallas, Texas," *Urban Anthropology and Studies of*

- Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 31 (2002): 129-161. This patron-client relation has been frequently reported about in Mexico; however, it has also been prevalent in various parts of Latin America and the Mediterranean region.
24. Roger Waldinger and Michael Lichter, *How the Other Half Works: Immigration and the Social Organization of Labor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003): 220.
  25. In Mexico, the *haciendas* were abolished by law in 1917 during the revolution, but remnants of the system still affect Mexico today. As Eric Wolf wrote, the *haciendas* were destroyed in part because the *hacienda* prevented the geographic mobility of a large part of Mexico's population. See Wolf, "Aspects of Group Relations in a Complex Society: Mexico," *American Anthropologist* 58:6 (December 1956): 1071.
  26. Chang and Diaz-Veizades, 104.
  27. Ruth Gomberg- Muñoz, "Willing to Work: Agency and Vulnerability in an Undocumented Immigrant Network," *American Anthropologist* 112:2 (2010): 301.
  28. Beth Baker-Cristales, *Salvadoran Migration to Southern California: Redefining El Herman Lejano* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).
  29. Koreans idealized a patrilineal and patrilateral kinship structure, while Mexicans upheld a bilateral kinship structure.
  30. There are religious differences, as most Latinos tend to be Catholic and most Koreans are Protestants. I have not heard Latinos and Koreans form a *compadre* (co-father or co-parent) relationship between the parents and godparents of a child when a child is baptized in Latino families, nor have I heard of Koreans' ritual sponsorship of other Catholic sacraments (first communion, confirmation, and marriage) or a *quinceañera* celebration, for instance.
  31. Nora Hamilton and Norma Chinchilla, *Seeking Community in a Global City: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001): 1; Susan Coutin, *Nations of Emigrants: Shifting Boundaries of Citizenship in El Salvador and the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007): 7.
  32. For instance, \$424 million in direct U.S. military assistance from 1981 to 1984 led to a rapid escalation of the war in El Salvador and a major disruption of the economy and livelihood of many Salvadorans. See Hamilton and Chinchilla, 32.
  33. Patricia Zavella, "Reflections on Diversity among Chicanas," Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek, eds., *Race* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994): 201.
  34. Eileen O'Brien, *The Racial Middle: Latinos and Asian Americans Living beyond the Racial Divide* (New York: NYU Press, 2008): 49.
  35. According to Rachel Moran, "Between 1940 and 1992, only 1.2 million Mexicans entered the U.S. as legal immigrants, while 4.6 million came as temporary contract workers, and approximately 4 million entered without

documents." See her article, "What If Latinos Really Mattered in the Public Policy Debate?," *California Law Review* 85:5 (1997): 1320.

36. The preferred Korean path for social mobility is not via entrepreneurship, but education.
37. The Central American Resource Center was founded by a group of Salvadoran refugees whose mission was to secure legal status for the thousands of Central Americans fleeing civil war. As the largest Central American organization in the country, CARECEN has four major program areas: legal services, education, civic participation, economic development. See <http://www.carecen-la.org> (accessed on November 12, 2011).
38. *El Rescate*, founded in 1981, was the first agency in the United States to respond with free legal and social services to the mass influx of refugees fleeing the war in El Salvador. See: <http://www.elrescate.org> (accessed on November 11, 2011).
39. Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008): 185. Their interviewees listed the following qualities: respect, family unity or closeness, family values, and to a lesser extent, culture or customs, language, religion, music, food, or fiestas. These traits are said to distinguish Mexican Americans from other groups.
40. Chang and Diaz-Veizades, 91.
41. Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance, *KIWA Worker Empowerment Clinic, Annual Report 2005* (Los Angeles: Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance, 2007): 17.
42. Chang and Diaz-Veizades, 97.
43. 45% of workers were paid in cash, while 45% were paid by cash and check, regular checks, and payroll checks. 40% of workers were paid on an hourly basis, while another 55% were paid on a salary. Only 31% received itemized deduction slips from their employers. 62% of employers failed to keep time records. 78% of workers had no benefits of any kind. See Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance, 5.
44. Chang and Diaz-Veizades, 105.
45. *Los Angeles Times*, November 18, 1994.
46. Edward Park, "Labor Organizing," 146.
47. Chung, 235.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, 133.
50. *La Opinion*, February 16, 1999; March 21, 2001
51. *La Opinion*, June 30, 2001
52. *La Opinion*, November 16, 2001
53. José Cobas, et al., *How the United States Racializes Latinos: White Hegemony and Its Consequences* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2009): 8.
54. Nadia Kim, 163.

55. Mr. Kwang Choi, a case manager at KIWA since 1995, may be the best example. He is deeply grateful to the government of El Salvador for providing him a full scholarship in the 1960s. His wife is also Salvadoran. He commands respect among Salvadoran workers.
56. One time, I attended an interviewee's G.E.D. graduation ceremony. I was struck by the conversation at the dinner table after the ceremony because, like anthropologists, they were making an argument for the validity of cultural relativism.
57. Reciprocity is a principle for organizing an economy often found in non-market economies; however, here it refers to a set of exchange relationships among individuals and groups.
58. They tend to trust Mexicans more than Salvadorans, invoking Salvadoran criminality due to Salvadoran gangs.
59. George Foster, in his seminal study of the Mexican peasant community of Tzintzuntzan, reported a patron-client relationship with an asymmetrical power differential, mobilized for the purposes of promoting villagers' security in a variety of life crises. See George Foster, "The Dyadic Contract in Tzintzuntzan, II: Patron-Client Relationship," *American Anthropologist* 65:6 (December 1963): 1282-1283.
60. Howard Stein, "A Note on Patron-Client Theory," *Ethos* 12:1 (March 1984): 30.
61. *Ibid.*, 33.
62. At Sam's liquor store, where I conducted a year-long observation in 2002, I saw African American customers inviting him to their parties and bringing him dinner.