1 Introduction
Imperial Racialization

GROWING UP, I often heard my mother recount how she had loved watching *Gone with the Wind, Wuthering Heights,* and other classic American motion pictures back in South Korea. She also told me that she had witnessed "real Americans" walking around near her hometown of Pusan, soldiers who were not just American but also Black. As a child I was too young to appreciate how much my mother knew about the United States and its people long before she immigrated there from South Korea in 1969. Indeed, it took some years before I could appreciate how intimately aware my mother and her friends were of President John F. Kennedy and his Camelot, seeing as how they cried when news of his death crossed the Pacific. Soon, however, my intellectual curiosity was roused by her stories. Simpler questions—What other American mass media had she engaged? What were her views of White and Black soldiers during the Korean War—translated into my curiosity about how she had generally constructed "Americanness" and her own countrypeople before emigrating.

My unanswered questions came to trouble me viscerally, however, as I watched Koreatown and other parts of Los Angeles aflame in 1992 purportedly because of Black-Korean racial conflicts, not then knowing how racially sensationalized the event was (Abelmann and Lie 1995). I could not help wondering whether Korean immigrants had taken cues from Whites' racism toward Blacks in their Korean homeland and in that way helped fuel LA's fires. Perhaps Koreans had seen too many *Gone with the Wind* mammy stereotypes or interpreted Black soldiers' second-class American status as reflective of a natural order, perhaps embracing the Confucianist ethos that deemed inequality as natural? On the other side of the divide, had U.S. stereotypes of Asian Americans as "model

minorities" or racial "foreigners" fostered anti-Asian stereotypes among Blacks? Did Blacks target Korean ethnics for imposing on "real" Americans?

Indeed, the foreignness of Korean Americans jumped off the television screens and newspaper pages, whether the media depictions were of model minority ghetto merchants or of immigrant outsiders (Palumbo-Liu 1994), another source of my deep disquiet. It seemed impossible for even the most well-intentioned person not to stereotype Koreans in these binary ways. I cringed at the recycled repertoire of images of Koreans crying and shrieking in the "un-American" Korean language, as hard-working, innocent model minority immigrants wronged by Black and Latino hoodlums, or as AK-47–toting vigilantes atop store rooftops who didn't seem to follow normal American customs of calling the police. To be sure, none of these sensationalist sound bites could capture the complexity of Korean America.

Upon combing articles and books and enrolling in numerous courses on "race" and ethnicity as a means to understand the chaos around me, I realized that most of the classic tools and theories I was given, such as various assimilation accounts, seemed to simplify the Asian immigrant experience by predicting that Koreans, as model minorities, would assimilate along most societal lines and "whiten." Unsatisfied, I began to harvest the fruits of my longtime intellectual curiosity and desire for social change. I returned to my mother's stories and peered beyond Los Angeles and the United States to ask other questions. For instance, did Koreans' history of being subjugated by U.S. imperial rule and their exposure to American racial hierarchies in their ethnic homeland not matter in any way? Did the U.S. government's lack of regard for Korean Americans and South Korea have anything to do with its inaction when Koreatown was burning for days, in contrast to its swift troop movement once Beverly Hills was *potentially* threatened (Cho 1993; E. Kim 1993)? Did the racial ideology[1] of Asian Americans as foreigners in the United States play no role, a notion that seemed to originate with U.S. imperialism? I realized that the classic social scientific literature could not help me fully understand such tragedies as the 1992 unrest. For one, the literature started and stopped its analyses within U.S. boundaries. If most Koreans (and other Asian Americans) had been arriving in the United States since 1970, however, I knew that the previous decades of U.S. dominance or influence in their home country had already been grounded in racial hierarchies. As Yen Le Espiritu (2003:210; see A. Ong 1996) aptly remarks in the case of Filipinos in the United States, their lives—and I believe Koreans' lives—are "shaped not only by the social location of their group within the

United States but also by the position of their home country within the global racial order." In other words, a consideration of racialization[2] *across borders* (Espiritu 2003) and through *multiple and related lines of inequality* (C. Kim 1999) begs reevaluation of the assimilating, whitening Asian model minority and of U.S. "race" inequality more broadly. By way of a global and multiracial framework, this book pursues a cross-border analysis of "imperialist racial formations" in South Korea and in the United States (Omi and Winant 1994). That is, I analyze the hegemonic link between the U.S. state and social movements, the backbone of American "race" dynamics in both countries, in a context of American imperialism. I do so from the vantage of the margins because macro social structures often do not reveal as much about the nature of power as those who are marginalized, who live the contradictions (Glick Schiller 2005). I draw primarily, then, on interviews with Koreans in Los Angeles County, California, and Seoul, South Korea (Republic of Korea or ROK), and I draw secondarily on ethnographic observations in Seoul, informal observations in Los Angeles, and archival newspaper research. Conducting multisite fieldwork rather than practicing what Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2003) call "methodological nationalism" allows me to capture the nature of American racial dominance in South Korea and its links to "race" within its own borders, as well as the cross-border lenses that immigrants use to navigate U.S. color and citizenship lines.

Informed by renewed inquiries into empire (e.g., Hardt and Negri 2000; Harvey 2003), I focus on the role of U.S. imperialism in shaping immigrants' transnational understandings of "race" and their related identities, thus departing from the American-centered framework of the field of U.S. immigration. Models of incorporation and assimilation in the United States have thus dominated, such as the segmented assimilation thesis (Portes and Zhou 1993) and, in more recent years, a well-received (neo)institutional theory by Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003). Segmented assimilation, Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993) theorize, is a segmented process of immigrant incorporation that departs from the unilinear trajectory of classic models, which is the theory's strength. In this framework, immigrants, the second generation in particular, navigate the modes of incorporation that greet them (e.g., policies, prejudices) and in the process follow three different pathways. One is "growing acculturation and parallel integration into the White middle-class; a second leads straight in the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass; still a third associates rapid economic advancement with

deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity" (Portes and Zhou 1993:82; see Gibson 1988). Laudably, the theory emphasizes the effects of color and integrates meaning-making within the processes that shape immigrants' fates. Yet, as all the pathways unfold in linear fashion in the United States, the model does not consider the fact that, for many groups, their choices and cultural mores, as well as the barriers they face, are tied to a history of Western dominance over their home countries. On this issue with reference to Asian Americans, Kenyon S. Chan and Shirley Hune (1995:213) aptly state that "throughout U.S. history each Asian American community continued to have its image and well-being defined not by its activities in the United States but by a racial order that was both domestic and international. No other American immigrant community has had its domestic relations with the U.S. government so determined by the nation's foreign policies with homeland states." In forging their lives in the United States, then, Asian immigrants are always reminded of and affected by these foreign relations.

Another major model, (neo)institutional theory (Alba and Nee 2003), laudably treats assimilation not as inevitable but as the unintended consequence of immigrants' working toward everyday goals of getting a good job, an education, and so on within institutional structures. Moreover, the theory avoids the presumption that immigrants are the only ones who change from assimilation processes because it posits that institutional structures themselves are changed by the immigrants. Despite the model's insightful correctives for the problems that have plagued more traditional assimilation models, it focuses only on what happens to the immigrants in institutions within the bounded United States. And in somewhat of a contrast to Portes and Zhou (1993), Alba and Nee do not consider institutionalized discrimination to be a barrier (anymore) for Asian Americans in the United States. Argued thus, the model leaves no room for the impact of Western racial hierarchies and ideologies in the immigrants' home countries. My study finds, however, that U.S. society conflates Asians in Asia and Asians in the United States in large part because of its historical and dominant relationship to both.

In considering segmented and (neo)institutional assimilation, I also depart from the primacy these accounts give to social class mobility as a determinant of immigrants' increased equality. Immigrants are said to assimilate in large part through movement up the social class ladder. What my study shows, however, is that social class is neither the only key axis of assimilation nor a ticket out of institutionalized and everyday racial barriers. To be certain, Korean Americans, including the second generation, do selectively assimilate by ex-

pressing strong ethnic identification and relying on ethnic networks to move up socioeconomically. But, again, social class is but one mark of social inequality. There are myriad factors that preclude full membership in the mainstream United States culture and the national identity. For instance, as long as Asian Americans continue to be associated with Asia, they do not escape racial bias simply because they have made it into the White American middle class. That is, no matter their command of English, high rates of female intermarriage with White men, Harvard degrees, and Beverly Hills homes, Asian Americans have still been treated as unassimilable "forever foreigners," in the words of Mia Tuan (1998). To be certain, Asian Americans (of mostly Eastern or Southern Asian backgrounds) have been valorized for their socioeconomic successes relative to presumably underclass Black Americans. As a result, Asian Americans can and do benefit from their "model minoritized bodies" at the expense of Blacks, especially in light of Whites' greater willingness to live beside and marry Asian Americans (C. Kim 2000). Yet, the fact that model minority acclaim has not been enough to confer authentic American status onto Asian ethnics yields a sort of fraternal twin in Black Americans' experiences of class. That is, just as a high class profile has not spared Black Americans from both institutionalized and everyday racism (e.g., S. Collins 1997; Cose 1993; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Williams 1991), class status has not spared, and in fact often exacerbates, nativistic racism toward Asian Americans. This link between the model minority and the yellow peril / foreigner makes apparent that the two ideologies are not discrete but part of a continuum of racialization. As Gary Okihiro (1994:142) aptly states, the model minority and the yellow peril are not poles but "form a circular relationship that moves in either direction." That is, although Asian Americans' success can incite anti–yellow peril discrimination (see Ancheta 1998; Newman 1993), the (feminized) model minority image can assuage fears of a (masculinized) yellow peril, enabling the representations to exist side by side (Okihiro 1994; see Espiritu 1997). The limits of social class upward mobility for undoing criminal notions of Blacks and forever foreigner conceptions of Asian Americans throw into relief the operation of racial dominance. In other words, through elites' frequent emphasis on "race" above social class and pitting of groups of color against one another, the larger racial order goes unquestioned and, more important, unchanged.

By incorporating Asian Americans' struggles with "race" and its citizenship dimensions, I critique sociological scholarship that predicts that Asian Americans (and Latinos/as) are "whitening," or racially assimilating, with Whites in

some fashion (Bonilla-Silva 2002; Gans 1999; J. Lee and Bean 2004; Warren and Twine 1997; Yancey 2003). Although these "Asian racial assimilation theses," as I call them, are stimulating, provocative, and work from different points of interest, my study problematizes the question itself. Can scholars categorically say that Asian Americans will "become" White or converge with Whites if "American citizen" and "White" continue to be hegemonically equated, with little sign of abatement (Lipsitz 1998; see Barrett and Roediger 1997)? This question and the related Asian American "foreigner" concept underscores the need for a new framework, one that captures racialization processes specific to Asians as a group (as well as Latinos). Namely, this framework would not simply impose concepts derived from the traditional White-Black color line onto Asian Americans (see Ancheta 1998; C. Kim 1999; T. Lee 2000; Okihiro 1994). Apt here is Cherríe Moraga's (1981:29) oft-quoted observation of men of color's activist focus on "race"/nation at the expense of gender, "the danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression" (Moya 1996). Aside from not analyzing the *specificity* of "race" and Asian Americans, on an empirical level the whitening predictions do not talk to or systematically observe the group (or Latinos) in the United States, nor do they draw on data from representative surveys that pursue questions specific to "race" and citizenship (Committee of 100 Survey 2001; see T. Lee 2000).[3] Additionally, these authors do not engage the convincing evidence that the White American "fathers" of the Chicago School in fact popularized Orientalist notions of Asian groups and contributed to the very foreigner racialization (H. Yu 2002) that today's sociologists of whitening either do not acknowledge or dismiss as relatively unimportant.

In a move beyond these racial assimilation theses, which do not account for racial barriers or the global inequalities that foster them, I examine in this book one of the key sources of racialization of Asian ethnics: U.S. imperialism in Asia since World War II (Espiritu 2003; Lowe 1996). Although a universalist analysis of United States–led racial formations in Asia has yet to be done and is beyond the scope of this study, I contend that the U.S. occupational forces and mass media culture are most pivotal in spreading American racial ideologies and forging White superiority over Koreans and Black Americans simultaneously.[4] This racial triangle of Koreans, White Americans, and Black Americans along multiple, unequal lines constitutes the imperialist racial formation in South Korea. Although the military occupation and mass media culture play primary roles, I demonstrate that American racialization would not enjoy its

level of potency were it not for complementary ideologies in South Korea and those channeled through Japan.

U.S. Imperialism and Global Racial Ideology

Scholarship on empire and imperialism has enjoyed a renaissance (e.g., Hardt and Negri 2000; Harvey 2003), further buoyed in recent years by the U.S. "War on Terror." Contemporary imperialism since World War II has involved a state's intervention into another by way of military armament and restructuring of capital, the military side of which cannot be overstated (Glick Schiller 2005:453). Without military force, the presence and profitable aims of capital are often not secured.

Despite a U.S. military occupation and subsequent capital investment in South Korea since World War II, insufficient attention has been paid to the U.S. empire here, rendering the "Forgotten War" and the overall Korean–United States history even more forgettable. Fixed attention on the Koreas, however, reveals that the U.S. intervention was part of the larger World War II project to realize global hegemony, especially over Japan (Lowe 1996:17). The United States was therefore not in Korea (or Vietnam) simply to stave off Communism or to capitalize on economic resources. It sought to use Asia as a "brutal theater" on which to "perform its technological modernity and military force in relation to the Asiatic world, a process legitimated by the emergence of the Soviet Union's and China's global influences" (Lowe 1996:17). To lay this postwar groundwork, the United States "liberated" Korea from Japan in 1945 and spared certain Japanese colonial institutions and agents in order to secure imperialist domination of the peninsula (Abelmann and Lie 1995). Since that time, an apex of 37,000 to 40,000 troops has been stationed in South Korea and has stood ready at the thirty-eighth parallel, the dividing line recklessly drawn across a map by U.S. and Soviet officials. This line, however, has remained the most militarized zone in the world.

Even with the sword, imperialist rule has needed racial ideologies in order to sustain itself. The growing scholarship on global racism has examined the spread of Euro-American ideologies of White racial superiority (Batur-VanderLippe and Feagin 1999; Bonilla-Silva 2000; Goldberg 2002; Smedley 1993; Winant 2001; see Hardt and Negri 2000). Despite growing apace, this generative field has said less about the history and nature of Western racial ideologies in (East/Southeast) Asia. Students of cultural studies, however, have documented U.S. imperialists' Orientalist ideologies of Asia and Asians as

exotic, feminine, Other—a foil for White (masculine) superiority (see Lowe 1996:101; Said 1979)—in order to justify imperialist ventures in Asia. The United States premised its war against Japan on "race," that is, against the "colored" yellow people seeking to take over Whites' global reign (for Japan, it was also a "race" war; Dower 1986; see Lipsitz 1997). The Vietnam War also fomented the foreigner racialization of the poor, third world, Communist "gook." Yet, even Asia's rapid economic growth into "Asian Tigers," one of the contradictions of U.S. imperialism (A. Ong 1999), has not necessarily fostered more positive racializations. Rather, Asian nations' eventual global investment in the United States and other advanced Western nations has served to *reinforce* the racial subordination of Asians and Asian Americans. That is, Japanese purchases of choice American real estate and popular cultural icons, Chinese campaign contributor John Huang's influence on President Bill Clinton, and Korean conglomerates buying up parts of the United States and Europe have morphed model minority Asians into the yellow peril (A. Ong 1999:174–80). Because the larger public typically cannot distinguish among Asian groups, all groups are vulnerable to antiforeigner backlash intended for other ethnics.

"Race" is also central insofar as U.S. rule abroad has relied on a military that, on balance, has positioned Whites over Blacks. In countries populated by mostly Asians, then, the physical differences between White and Black Americans tend to be the most apparent. By way of its White-Black order, the United States racially "Americanizes" other countries.

As further testament to this fact, I will show that South Koreans were acutely aware of the White-Black "face" of the military yet were largely unable to identify Latinos as another group stationed in their country. Not only was this blind spot the product of stark White-Black phenotypic differences and of initial Jim Crow segregation, it was also the effect of Koreans' weaker familiarity with the Latino/Hispanic category. Also important has been the lack of South Koreans' local conflicts with Latinos as a collective. Although the U.S. occupational forces have familiarized the Republic of Korea (ROK) to ideologies of White superiority *as they relate to* Black inferiority, the lines of hierarchy are complicated by Black Americans' role in U.S. imperialism over a non-White country like South Korea.

Broadly conceived, U.S. imperialism has extended to non-White countries a version of racial formation, one that need be differentiated, however, from racial formation in the United States (Omi and Winant 1994; see Goldberg 2002). One difference is U.S. imperialism's noted reliance on one group of

color to help subordinate another group of color in a lesser country, thereby creating multiple and complex lines of inequality. Additionally, in subordinated nations such as South Korea, people are not solely fighting against imposed *racial* categories as fashioned in and by the United States, but for the ability to determine their *national* status, albeit racialized, in the global economic order. From their nationalist vantage point, then, sovereignty and positive recognition in this global order would elevate Koreans' racialized place in the United States and, thereby, the world. To be certain, those Koreans who have immigrated tend to favor "America" and its modernity more than those who did not leave (Abelmann and Lie 1995:68–81). Even immigrants who sense an imperialist edge to the U.S. military "ally's" so-called benevolence—a celebrated view among some in the ROK—themselves emigrate with an idealized view of "America" as the land where all their dreams will come true (see Glick Schiller 2005:455). In this way, consent to White American superiority or to Korean or Black inferiority resides right along with resistance to these ideologies.

However, I should caution against American readers imposing U.S. discourses[5] of antiracism and social desirable "race" talk onto South Koreans. Without excusing or dismissing learned prejudices, it needs to be said that South Korea is a near-homogenous nation with few Black American civilians in its midst. Its slave system, which had ended by the late 1800s, oppressed its own or those of similar phenotype across kingdom factions (Peterson 2000:4), standing in stark contrast to White Americans' enslavement of Africans. The fact that "race" per se has not been at the center of South Korean systems diverges from Americans' profound conditioning by antiracist social movements and norms of social desirability since slavery. I also follow Tyrone Forman's (forthcoming) contention that institutions and dominant ideologies are "racist" while individuals are "prejudiced." Rather than racist, I would thus describe Koreans as racially prejudiced, just as I would not describe Black Americans who reiterate anti-Korean or anti-Asian stereotypes to be racist but prejudiced.[6]

The Global Culture of "Race"

Globalization involves not just the spread of military, capital, and goods but also the flows of images and ideas. In addition to the indelible impact of the U.S. armed forces, South Koreans have been profoundly affected by U.S. mass media saturation, whether in the form of pro-military programs on American

Forces Korea Network, *Gone with the Wind*, commercials for Uncle Ben's rice, *Mission Impossible III, Peyton Place,* or CNN's coverage of the 1992 LA unrest. In fact, Koreans often interpret the superpower status of White America through cultural tropes in U.S. mass media. As Darnell Hunt (1997:144) argues, it is people's concrete situations through which race-as-representation in media texts acts as "an immediate social force." For instance, impoverished South Korean children who gleefully receive chocolate from smiling White American soldiers would likely have little problem making sense of media imagery of White Americans as powerful, rich, and happy (see Appadurai 1990).

In defining the globalization of culture, John Tomlinson (1999:1) makes clear that globalization and its economic and political dimensions are not *reducible* to culture (see also Featherstone 1990; A. Ong 1999). At the same time, he contends that "the huge transformative processes of our time that globalization describes cannot be properly understood until they are grasped through the conceptual vocabulary of culture; likewise . . . these transformations change the very fabric of cultural experience and, indeed, affect our sense of what culture actually is in the modern world."

As paralleled in the GIs and chocolate bar example, Tomlinson (1999) conveys that people within the proverbial global village are not motivated simply by global political-economic structures. They require a cultural repertoire that affords an interpretation of these structures. Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman (1999) explain further that the way in which people *talk* about social phenomena, such as globalization, dictates their behaviors; for instance, if political discussions are constrained by norms of polite conversation or if people believe that all major social problems are rooted in the family, most will not be galvanized into action against the injustices of the World Bank. On the nature of global culture, Tomlinson also notes that changes wrought by a world with more porous nation-state lines transform the very cultural repertoire from which people draw. As a final note, Hall (1991:28) makes the important point that local differences are in part sustained even with the major homogenizing shifts brought on by global culture. In other words, South Korea is not becoming another "America," but its cultural system certainly has folded in, and defines itself against, an "American conception of the world" (Hall 1991:28).

What happens, then, when this conception of the world involves *racial* messages? In a piece on racist ideologies and the mass media, Stuart Hall (2003:90) contends that mass media are particularly important for spreading ideologies as "they are, by definition, part of the dominant means of *ideological*