

Extended Editing Example Pages: Second Edit

Given the strong emphasis on ethnic nationhood prevalent in Korea (Pai and Tangherlini 1998), the recent “multicultural boom” in Korea is surprising. The real paradox, however, is immigrants’ attitudes towards the multicultural boom. The immigrants themselves are silent, indifferent, or even critical of, this multicultural boom (Oh, 2007; Lee, 2007). For example, an immigrant activist¹ makes the following comment about *Migrants’ Arirang*, the Korean government-sponsored multicultural festival,²

Comment [J1]: Again, I’m not sure mc boom is the right phrase to use here. Try something more specific.

Comment [J2]: Later in the text can use use quotes or examples from these sources as support for this claim?

From the beginning to the end, Koreans controlled every aspect of *Migrants’ Arirang*. Just displaying exotic cultures won’t bring Koreans and migrant workers closer. Cooperation and communication [in the process] are essential to achieve the aim. If the festival continues to run like as it does now, no immigrant workers would be interested in participating in the festival anymore. (Author Interview, July 2006)

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As indicated in the above interview excerpt, the immigrant activist expresses his disapproval of the “multicultural” event due to the lack of representation of immigrants in the process. Indeed, immigrant national associations in Korea “are simply mobilized to various government-organized events. They do not either express opinions on multiculturalism or initiate multicultural event of their own.” (Lee 2007, p. 103) The Migrant Workers Trade Union (MTU)

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¹ I use the term “immigrant activist” to refer to activists who are themselves immigrants as opposed to Korean-born activists.

² *Migrants’ Arirang* is a government-sponsored (Ministry of Culture and Tourism) multicultural festival. It started in 2005 and has become an annual event held at the end of May. *Arirang* is the name of an old Korean folksong, whose lyrics symbolize the hardship of the oppressed Korean nation and its will to overcome such hardship. The purpose of this festival is twofold. First, *Migrants Arirang* aims to provide migrants, especially migrant workers, a chance to take a break from demanding work. Second, the festival aims to provide an opportunity for Koreans to encounter different cultures.

shows a little more critical attitude than immigrant national organizations do but MTU is many indifferent toward multiculturalism (Lee 2007).

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This is in strong contrast to immigrants in Western European countries. In those countries, political claims based on cultural and ethnic difference have become popular among immigrants (see, e.g., Koopmans and Statham, 1999; Koopmans et al., 2005). Immigrants argue that multiculturalism can lead to a peaceful coexistence among different ethno-cultural groups within a single nation-state. Indeed, some scholars suggest that multiculturalism gained its international popularity as a result of politically active immigrants seeking cultural recognition (see, e.g. Kymlicka, 2005). Given the international popularity of multiculturalism, it would be advantageous for immigrants in Korea to make multicultural claims to gain international support.

In addition, the idea of multiculturalism could prove to be an attractive alternative to Korea's current focus on a singular ethnic nationhood. For immigrants intending to settle in Korea, replacing the present ethnic notion of Korean nationhood with a multicultural one would be beneficial in the long-term. The recent interest in multiculturalism in Korea seems to indicate that the idea of multiculturalism has finally become acceptable not only to Korean activists and intellectuals but also to government officials.

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All these factors indicate that the conditions are favorable for immigrants in Korea to advance their political claims via the adoption of multiculturalism. But despite this context, immigrants in Korea are skeptical about the recent "multicultural boom". Why do immigrant activists in

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Korea eschew multiculturalism when the context and opportunity structure seem so favorable for embracing multiculturalism? This paper sets out to address this paradox.

I argue that the concept of classification struggle (Bourdieu 1994, 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Fraser 1997; Goldberg 2003, 2007; Swartz 1997) can help to solve this paradox of multiculturalism in Korea. In addition, [the classification struggle perspective can be a helpful conceptual framework for immigrant political activism in general.](#)

Classification struggle refers to struggles over social categories of [belonging](#) (Bourdieu 1984; Swartz 1997). [Social groups—whether based on age, sex, ethnicity, class, or skill—are constructed through classification: properties associated with a particular group are also distributed via classification](#) (Bourdieu 1998). This social categorization is politically significant to the extent that such categorization produces a hierarchy among groups. In this sense, the classification struggle approach welds the realm of culture/identity and the realm of interest/politics (Goldberg 2003; Swartz 1997), showing how construction of certain group identities is both a means and a goal for immigrant political activism (Brubaker 1992).

Classification struggle unfolds largely in two aspects. [One concerns the social properties of the group in question. The other has to do with the symbolic authority of those who claim to represent that particular group. Indeed, the legitimacy of the claims depends mainly on these two factors. Feminist activists, for example, have to prove that women as a group possess the qualities that make women deserve equal rights as men do](#) (Alexander 2003, 2005). In addition,

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those who make claims on behalf of women have to establish their authentic affiliation with women lest their claims would be discredited.

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Adding classification struggle to the analytical toolkit yields a convincing explanation of the paradox of multiculturalism in Korea. The institutional actors (the Korean government and Korean activists on behalf of immigrants) intentionally and unintentionally refuse to acknowledge immigrants as full members of the Korean nation-state; immigrants are either those who should return to their home countries or those who need to acquire certain qualities in order to be included in the Korean nation-state (Kim 2007). Further, an analysis of the dynamics between institutional actors and immigrants suggest that immigrants are still classified as inferior to ethnic Koreans even after immigrants acquire those required qualities. Immigrant activists believe that institutional actors' interest in multiculturalism only perpetuates the negative classification of immigrants as less than full members of the Korean nation-state. By refusing to embrace the kind of multiculturalism initiated and promoted by Korean institutional actors, immigrant activists protest such negative classification. As the concept of classification struggle suggests, the paradox of multiculturalism in Korea is about what kinds of properties immigrants possess and who makes the decisions concerning the distribution of these properties, that is, the making of immigrants as a social group.

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