

Between Two Worlds: Generational Identity and Acculturation in Min Jin Lee’s “*Pachinko*”

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Abstract

This study examines four acculturation mechanisms, i.e., assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization, utilized by four generations of Korean immigrants in Min Jin Lee’s *Pachinko* (2017), using John W. Berry’s acculturation theory as a framework. By incorporating literary analysis with psychological theory, this research contributes to the discourse on diasporic identity and acculturation in literature. The study analyses how characters from different generations negotiate their identity through multiple acculturation strategies and how they deal with acculturative stress, the findings show that acculturation is a complex and nonlinear process as characters exhibit different strategies in their lived experience. Acculturative stress is affected by factors such as economic hardship, racial discrimination, and social exclusion, while age and the individual’s preferred acculturation strategy have a direct impact. The marginalization strategy leads to extreme distress. Although integration is the least stressful and minimizes psychological distress, it is quite unattainable due to systemic and cultural barriers. Ultimately, this research is relevant to understanding contemporary immigrant experiences that will impact future literature studies.

Keywords: acculturation, assimilation, separation, integration, marginalization, acculturative stress

Introduction

This research intends to look into the nuanced strategies used by four generations of Korean immigrants to negotiate with the host Japanese society. It focuses on how Lee’s characters grapple with their sense of identity while constantly facing cultural exclusion and discrimination. This research uses John W.

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Berry's acculturation strategies, i.e., assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization, to explore the development of hybrid identities within a diasporic context. It will further scrutinize the acculturative stress experienced by different characters in *Pachinko* (2017) while balancing and adapting the norms, values, and practices of the mainstream host culture.

Acculturation is a process through which people from different cultures or ethnic backgrounds try to acquire and incorporate themselves into the prevalent culture. It is a phenomenon that brings forth psychological, social, and cultural adjustment of an individual in a new culture by making him adapt, integrate, or separate from the dominant culture on an attitudinal or behavioral level.

There are four strategies in Acculturation

a) Assimilation b) Separation c) Integration d) Marginalization

Assimilation means wholly acquiring and adapting to the norms of the larger group and as a result being indistinguishable from the society one has assimilated into. It is a process by which individuals from differing cultures adjust to the host culture by changing their religion, language, values, and practices according to the native society. Through this process, immigrants entirely forget and abandon their original culture to blend in with the larger society. Separation is the strategy through which diasporic individuals tend not to adopt the prevalent culture and stick to their original culture. Through this strategy, individuals adhere to their native culture by maintaining their sense of identity and belonging while completely ignoring and having no connection with the host culture.

Integration, also known as biculturalism, is another strategy of acculturation in which an individual can maintain both his original and host culture simultaneously. It includes having a strong sense of identity and belonging to their native culture while actively participating in the practices of the prevalent culture. This would lead to cultural diversity by integrating and merging the values and practices of both cultures and operating with them side by side in daily life. Lastly, in marginalization, an individual rejects both his original and host culture, losing one's identity and connection to both. Eventually, the individual feels pushed aside by the rest of society. Marginalization usually comes forward when the immigrants are tired of participating in the new society while experiencing cultural loss as well.

Pachinko by Min Jin Lee, published in 2017, is a multigenerational saga of a diasporic Korean family that deals with the issues of race, family, love, trauma, and identity in host Japanese society. The story focuses on a Korean girl Sunja, who belongs to the second generation of immigrants and is the daughter of a crippled fisherman. She falls for a wealthy man and has a child named Noa out of wedlock. When she finds out that he is already married, she accepts the proposal of a sickly minister staying at her boardinghouse and on his way to Japan. She leaves with him for Japan, and here begins the story of her children, the third generation of immigrants, grappling with their sense of identity and belonging to their native Korean culture while trying to merge into the mainstream culture. Her sons, Noa and Mozasu, use two very contrasting ways to lead their lives as Zainichi Koreans (the term Zainichi literally means foreigners staying in Japan but refers explicitly to ethnic Korean minorities living in Japan) living in a hostile environment.

Throughout the novel, Lee focuses on the sacrifice and strength of displaced Koreans while facing racial discrimination and prejudice. The story also delves into the themes of economic hardships and gender roles in a patriarchal traditional Korean society. Traditional expectations and duties of women are projected through the character of Sunja when she becomes the breadwinner of her family. Despite these hardships, Lee highlights the resilience and inner strength of the character rather than the traumatic diasporic experience. Through the story of Sunja, she demonstrates how an ordinary Korean girl, whose husband is in jail, becomes a source of solace and happiness for her family despite being in a foreign land and culture. Sunja's hope and determination are much celebrated throughout the work. It ignites her children to rise like a phoenix from the hardships of a society that does not accept them and thinks of them as filthy second-class citizens.

As a historian, Lee uses the historical events of the early 20th century to the late 20th century (1910- 1980) as a setting for her novel. The novel illustrates the socio-economic conditions during the Japanese annexation of Korea from 1910 to 1945 and World War II, along with the outcome of the war and its drastic impact on Koreans. It also gives accounts of the post-war rebuilding of Japan. Lee's writing style is straightforward as she uses simple and clear language expressing the authenticity of characters and depicting realism through their dialogues. Min Jin Lee uses a third-person omniscient narrator in her novel, through which we get to know the inner thoughts of multiple characters.

She crafts a multigenerational story involving many characters yet gives each character ample attention and vividly portrays their motivations, history, and moral dilemmas. She incorporates the elements of symbolism in her writing and the foremost example is the title itself. Pachinko is a game in Japan based primarily on luck. It shows how little is in human hands and despite their efforts, external forces like discrimination, prejudice, and oppression often decide their fate. On the other hand, it also symbolizes that almost no opportunities are given to Zainichi Koreans in economic fields. They are excluded from every working industry and are left with no choice except to open pachinko parlors to make ends meet. While these parlors provide good fortune, they are not socially accepted by the stereotypical Japanese society.

Min Jin Lee, a Korean American writer and journalist, was born in Seoul, South Korea, on November 11, 1968. Her family moved to the United States in 1976 when she was seven. They settled in Elmhurst, Queens, in New York City, where her parents owned a wholesale jewelry shop. Lee studied at Bronx High School of Science and got a history degree from Yale in 1990. She studied law at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and worked as a lawyer for a few years. Min was diagnosed with dormant chronic hepatitis B leading to liver cirrhosis. She had to leave her job but she eventually recovered. Not being able to afford another degree in fine arts, she learnt to write by reading plenty of books and attending small classes and seminars. She started writing after recovering from liver disease and published her first novel, "Free Food for Millionaires" in 2007. Attending a seminar where a Japanese missionary discussed the experience of Zainichi Koreans inspired her to write her second book (Britannica par.14).

Lee lived with her husband in Japan for some time, from 2007 to 2011. Here, she had first-hand experience with Korean immigrants and realized that to capture the essence of their experience in her novel Pachinko, she would have to write her draft again. Pachinko was published in 2017 and is the second book in the trilogy, "The Korean". She wrote short stories including "Axis of Happiness" and "Motherland". Lee has also written essays and lectured about history, literature, and writing at different universities. Throughout her writing career, she drew influence from George Eliot, Honoré de Balzac, Willa Cather, Leo Tolstoy, and James Baldwin. In her works, Lee mainly focuses on the themes of Korean diaspora, sense of identity, race, class, and love. She received many awards to this date including the Henry Wright Prize for Nonfiction, the NYFA (New York Foundation for the Arts)

Fellowship for Fiction, the Peden Prize from The Missouri Review for Best Story, and The Narrative Prize for New and Emerging Writer. She also received the Manhae Grand Prize for Literature in 2022 and the Fitzgerald Prize for Literary Excellence in 2024.

The framework of acculturation strategies being employed for the analytical study of *Pachinko* is proposed by John W. Berry in his book "Cross-Cultural Psychology", second edition, co-authored by Ype H. Poortinga, Marshall H. Segall, and Pierre R. Dasen. He described concepts of plural society, psychological acculturation, acculturative stress, adaptations, and acculturation strategies.

Plural society refers to a multicultural society where people with different cultures and ethnic backgrounds live in the same political and geographic space. Cultural diversity is deemed a natural and often beneficial aspect of human organization. Psychological acculturation focuses on the internal behavioral and psychological changes at the individual level due to lengthened contact with an outside culture. Psychological acculturation differs from group acculturation because the latter focuses more on changes done on societal and economic levels (Berry et al. 347-350). Acculturative stress is an outcome of psychological acculturation. A stress reaction follows when an individual faces difficulty adapting to the new host culture. Typically, the reactions include depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and nervousness while in contact with other cultures (Berry et al. 362). Acculturation can be both advantageous and contradictory as it can undermine one's life choices due to new opportunities and prejudices. The term stress has both positive and negative connotations attached to it and the term acculturative implies that it is the amalgamation of two cultures. Berry prefers the term acculturative stress over culture shock which also highlights the bidirectional nature of acculturation. According to Berry, integration is the least stressful strategy for an individual while marginalization is the most stressful. The stress level between the other two strategies, i.e. assimilation and separation, varies depending on the context (Berry 708).

Individuals try to deal with changes in a foreign culture so that a long-term adaptation may be achieved. Adaptation does not necessarily mean adjusting and changing yourself according to the host culture. It is a bipolar concept that also involves resisting change during the adapting process. Psychological adaptation involves an individual's well-being in terms of psychological or physical health.

Whereas sociocultural adaptations refer to how an acculturating individual goes on with his life in a new cultural context (Berry et al. 370).

Acculturation is a long-term dual process of psychological and cultural change due to prolonged contact between ethnic groups and their members. Two main concepts define it. The first describes acculturation as a special aspect of cultural change during direct contact with other cultures. It is a two-way process involving dominant and non-dominant groups and includes various strategies and outcomes like changes in policies, social structures, and institutions. The second contains factors affecting individuals, such as ecological shifts and demographic trends, rather than only impacting cultural contact. Migration, colonization, globalization, and other cultural contacts bring two distinct cultural groups into a society and force them to acculturate (Berry et al. 350).

The acculturation strategies are based on two key questions: (1) To what extent does the individual want to stick with their heritage culture? and (2) To what extent does the acculturative individual participate in the larger society? The choice of strategy is based on various cultural, psychological, and socio-economic factors (Berry 704). These four strategies carry different names in the case of dominant or non-dominant groups. The strategies regarding immigrants constitute assimilation (completely adapting to the host culture), separation (sticking to the original culture and sidelining the new culture), integration (maintaining the native culture while actively engaging with the prevalent culture), and marginalization (neither keeping heritage culture nor adapting to the mainstream culture). Integration particularly requires the dominant group to be open towards cultural diversity. However, if the dominant group influences the acculturative strategies used by the immigrants, the names would change into melting pot, segregation, multiculturalism, and exclusion, respectively (Berry et al. 355). Recent studies advocate integration as the most successful acculturation strategy among youth, following separation, assimilation, and marginalization. This research research aims to examine which strategy the multigenerational Korean family uses in Pachinko.

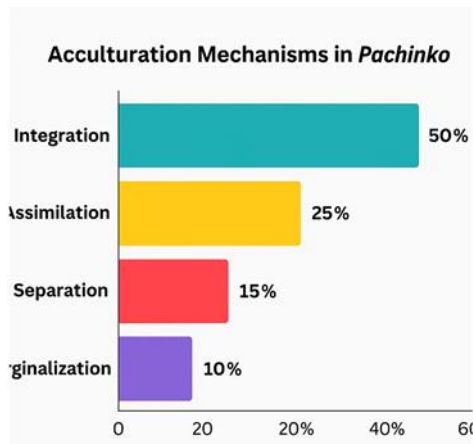
John Widdup Berry is a psychologist and a professor at Queen's University, Canada. He is primarily known for his ideas about cross-cultural and intercultural psychology. Intercultural psychology provides insights into acculturation strategies and acculturative stress whereas cross-cultural psychology involves research on the ecological and cultural influences on the behaviors of individuals. He has written

many textbooks and handbooks from 1990 to 2016 and recently co-edited a book of classic and current works on cross-cultural psychology. His books have been translated into many languages including Chinese, Greek, Korean, Russian, and Turkish.

In intercultural psychology, Berry's concept of acculturation mechanisms includes four main strategies to lead intercultural living, which tend to bring forth change or adjustment in three primary forms of adaptation, i.e., psychological well-being, sociocultural competence, and intercultural relations. Discrimination individuals face during acculturation leads to the rise of acculturative stress. In cross-cultural psychology, Berry researched how ecological surroundings directly affect an individual's behavior and practices, such as thinking, perceiving, and interacting. While researching this theory, his primary focus was on the Indigenous peoples of Africa, the Arctic, and Asia.

Table: Acculturation Mechanisms in *Pachinko*

Strategy	Definition	Key Characters	Generation	Description / Evidence from the Novel	Stress Level
Assimilation	Abandoning native culture to fully adopt the host culture.	Noa	3 rd Generation	Noa wants to be Japanese, avoids Korean food/language, uses a Japanese name, and distances himself from his Korean identity.	Moderate
		Hansu	2 nd Generation		
Separation	Retaining native culture while rejecting the host culture.	Yangjin	1 st Generation	Yangjin wears <i>hanbok</i> and doesn't learn Japanese. Yoseb wishes to return to Korea and wants his ashes buried there.	High
		Yoseb	2 nd Generation		
		Pastor Hu	2 nd Generation		
Integration	Maintaining both native and host cultures (bicultural identity).	Mozasu	3 rd Generation	Mozasu succeeds in pachinko while embracing his Korean identity. Solomon navigates both cultures but still faces discrimination.	Low
		Sunja	2 nd Generation		
		Solomon	4 th Generation		
Marginalization	Rejecting both native and host cultures, leading to a lack of cultural identity.	Noa (later life)	3 rd Generation	Noa is ashamed of both identities, eventually ends his life. Solomon, despite being born in Japan, still feels alienated.	Very High
		Solomon (hinted)	4 th Generation		



Review of the Literature

This research aims to study the existing body of literature available on the primary text. *Pachinko* (2017) is a multigenerational family saga that has received substantial international acclaim from the New York Times, The Guardian, The Irish Times, BBC, and The Washington Post. It has been a runner-up of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize in 2018, winner of Medici Book Club Prize. It has been termed as the 15th best book of the 21st century by The New York Times and 'Best Fiction of 2017' by The Esquire.

Lee has skillfully portrayed women of different ages and classes suffering at the hands of male dominance. The article titled "A Woman's Lot To Suffer": Recognizing the Intersectionality of Oppression and Resistance in Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*" aims to explore the status of women as the 'second sex' and 'other' in private and public domains. Confucian ideology places women as inferior to men and portrays strict gender roles, believing them to be the way of life. The women are expected to handle household affairs, confining them to a private arena, while men are fit to handle social and political issues (Srikureja 18). Despite the financial crisis, Kyunghee is not allowed to work by her husband. This gender-role divide can be seen in *Pachinko* as many individuals interlink suffering with the female gender. Sunja's mother, Yangjin, instills in her daughter the belief that her happiness and well-being are solely based on her husband, and she should always work hard and expect suffering (Árnadóttir 14). This article also discusses how Confucian beliefs can escalate to the point of objectifying women, viewing them merely as tools to fulfill male desires.

Although Confucian patriarchy, colonialization, and nationalism make women believe that they are sufferers, Lee's portrayal of Sunja indicates otherwise.

Pachinko has been explored through the lens of trauma theory in a research titled "Trauma in the Asian Anglophone Novels Pachinko and The Mountains Sing". It examines the unrecognized trauma experienced by the displaced characters. The cause of trauma may be the same, but every individual experience it differently. War, displacement, colonialization, and systemic discrimination are the causes of trauma in this multigenerational saga (Schulzki and Christina 36). The second generation, consisting of Sunja, goes through unrecognized trauma as she faces daily discrimination in Japan. Noa's difficulties are also linked to her relationship with Koh Hansu, which adds to her trauma.

The difference in the lives of the third generation, Noa and Mozasu, shows how they respond to trauma differently. To avoid discrimination and being laughed at in school, Noa's secret and topmost wish is to be Japanese. Mozasu, despite being happy and wealthy, still deals with unjust behavior and societal inequalities in silence. Solomon, fourth generation, also has to deal with extreme prejudices in Japan as he has to register himself with the Japanese government and is constantly treated as other while being born and raised in Japan (R.S 3). He is also fired due to a simple inconvenience and his Korean background, which eventually contributes to his trauma. The outcome of these happenings is not directly stated in the text but the underlying trauma can be seen in their lives.

Liyue Huang, using Bhabha's hybridity theory, explores the dilemma of identity formation in diasporic characters in "The Construction of Identity in "the Third Space" Taking Mozasu and Noa in the Novel Pachinko as an Example". The efforts of the three generations of diasporic individuals have changed the future generation's identity issues by establishing a new identity for them and providing the Zainichi with a stable life (Huang 135). Huang's research highlights the evolving journey of displaced Koreans' identity formation. The first and second generations try to be accepted as a component of the culture but in response face marginalization.

On the other hand, younger generations consisting of Mozasu and Solomon, craft their new identity instead of seeking validation from the host society. Contrastingly, Noa fails to form his identity in the third space and commits suicide due to shame

and societal pressures. This shift in the lives of Mozasu and Solomon highlights their change of focus from external struggle to internal peace, embracing a unique hybridized identity containing both Korean heritage and the newly lived Japanese experience.

A review titled “Pachinko by Min Jin Lee review – rich story of the immigrant experience” by Tash Aw in *The Guardian* highlights the originality of the lived experiences described in *Pachinko*. This review brings to light the Japanese annexation of Korea which is often overshadowed by broader historical events such as WWII or European colonial empires. *Pachinko* stands as a literary monument having a depth that preserves the Korean legacy. The novel goes beyond just the historical events and focuses on each character's personal and emotional realities. Lee blends the historical context with individuals by depicting its effects on them (Bădulescu 123). Yoseb Baek is severely injured in the bombings in Nagasaki and dies due to their impact. Sunja and her sister-in-law must put up a stall to deal with economic issues.

This review draws attention to Lee’s impressive storytelling of people whose history is endangered by time. From the everyday experiences of the fishing village to the intimate, human details of people who are trying to carve a niche for themselves, this research vividly portrays the Zainichi Korean experience, which is often overlooked by the world (Aw par. 7). It sheds light on the resilience and strength of the Zainichi people and acknowledges their sacrifices, which can only be obtained via thorough research.

In *The New York Times*, a review titled “In ‘Pachinko,’ a Stunning Family Saga Where History Itself Is a Character” highlights Lee’s use of stylistic techniques to convey deeper themes. The game ‘Pachinko’ serves at both literal and symbolic levels unifying the core themes of identity, inclusivity, and native land (Lee par. 3). The Japanese game symbolizes Korean ethnicity and Yakuza in Japan. Japanese, out of pure prejudice, do not offer Koreans any jobs. It is the only source of income for ethnic Koreans and even contributes to the country’s GDP.

The pachinko game represents both connection and alienation. Connection to the Zainichi families and alienation from host society. This is why Mozasu, despite being wealthy, feels that he has no worth in society. When Solomon is fired, he accepts his fate and decides to take over Mozasu’s pachinko business. This highlights the socio-

economic struggles of Zainichi Koreans and how these parlors serve as a source of survival.

A review by Jean Zimmerman titled "Culture Clash, Survival and Hope In 'Pachinko'" highlights the endurance of displaced characters under challenging circumstances. They do not see themselves as historical victims and focus on letting things go. This review admits Pachinko to be the tale of gruesome realities, such as when Isak is arrested for simply being a missionary who is only suspected of anti-Japanese activities. His health worsens in prison and he dies of weakness and frailty shortly after being released. However, these hardships are a part of the narration not the core element. The core element is the strength of human bonds and how they adapt and find meaning even in unjust circumstances (Zimmerman par. 9). Mozasu accepts his place in Japanese society very early in his life and remains steadfast in achieving something. This shows his choice of moving on and trying to form his identity rather than seeking validation.

The characters' longing for their homeland as they face cultural stagnation is examined in the research titled "Exploring Identity Dynamics in Min Jin Lee's Pachinko through Different Paradigms: Marginality, Liminality, Alterity, Cultural Syncretism, Exilic Consciousness, and the Myth of Going Home". This research analyzes Pachinko through the lens of different concepts including the myth of going home. It refers to the idea of returning home ingrained in immigrants' minds. For this, they try to be in contact with their homeland and continue practicing their cultural traditions and norms in their new land (Lina and Muhammad 401). This creates tension between their desire and longing for home while adapting to the new environment. The conflict results in individuals constantly negotiating their identities and balancing between their native culture and host society.

Sojeong Oh's research titled "Trans-boundary and Trans-identity: Pachinko" deals with Frantz Fanon's concept of 'colonial gaze' to describe the experience of immigrants in the novel. This research examines how Koreans were treated as outsiders primarily judged by the colonial i.e. Japanese gaze. They were termed 'good Koreans' or 'bad Koreans' based on their actions and social participation. This concept is the same as how White-centered society deemed Blacks as uncivilized, brutes, and sinful, pushing them towards the boundaries (Oh 105). The novel depicts how both physical and symbolic boundaries are imposed on Koreans as they live in an isolated slum area that represents their inability to blend in with the host society.

Even after multiple generations, they are considered boundary-crossers and still hold a Korean passport. This treatment leads to the formation of trans-identity.

Another research titled “A Critical Analysis on the Novel *Pachinko* from the Perspective of Coaching Psychology” deals with Lee as a mentor who guides individuals to have more wisdom and strength in adversity. In their research, Jong-ok Seok and Jun-ki Chung examine how the social system is important for individuals to survive in harsh conditions. One of the main concepts of coaching psychology involves humans as social animals who need social support to be more resilient. In *Pachinko*, this social support is based mainly on the family because the broader society already marginalizes the characters. Sunja has the support of her sister-in-law, her mother, and her second child, Mozasu, in the latter half.

Noa acts against this concept when he finds out about his biological father being a Yakuza. When Sunja and Hansu find Noa and offer him support, he commits suicide, not willing to be associated with his Korean heritage (Seok and Chung 437). *Pachinko* explores the suffering and alienation of Zainichi Koreans, emphasizing the brutal treatment by society. However, it does not only document the struggles. It ultimately gives a lesson to learn from the bad experiences and not let history define one’s future.

Pertiwi and Dewi employed a cultural-equivalent strategy in their research “Semantic Analysis in Translating Cultural Elements in the Novel *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee.” They employed a qualitative approach, focusing on themes of national identity, prejudice, and crisis by applying four semantic approaches: referential, ideational, behavioral, and pragmatic (Pertiwi and Dewi 3). The study proved that a cultural-equivalent strategy was the most effective way to gauge complex cultural elements and nuances. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating various semantic approaches to address tangible and abstract notions in literary works.

A research titled “Systematic review: Acculturation strategies and their impact on the mental health of migrant populations” deals with the systematic review of twenty-one studies and a sample of sixty thousand immigrants to analyze the impact of acculturation strategies on the mental health of immigrants. The findings relate to Berry’s framework, demonstrating that individuals who exhibit integration showcase the most positive mental health outcomes. On the other hand,

marginalization leads to most problems, including anxiety, PTSD, depression, and stress, with individuals having three times more chance to face problems as compared to other strategies. The article highlights that intrinsic factors, i.e., host language proficiency, poor physical health, and extrinsic factors, i.e., unemployment and family dysfunction, negatively affect migration acculturation (Choy et al.3). In *Pachinko*, many Koreans in Ikaino have poor health and unemployment issues, which result in acculturative stress. On the other hand, characters like Mozasu, who choose the integration strategy, were less psychologically and emotionally distressed.

The significance of this research is that it focuses on the process of identity formation of displaced characters through the use of Berry's acculturation strategies. Previous researches have examined themes of feminism, hybrid identity, trauma, suffering, resilience, and the characters' longing for home in *Pachinko*. However, there is a gap in understanding how individuals exhibit acculturation strategies while navigating their lives and how these strategies help them take action and make decisions that lead to their future. This research will add to the existing literature on *Pachinko* in the domain of identity negotiation in diasporic literature by combining the psychological theory of acculturation with literary analysis, providing a profound understanding of the individual psyche and systemic discrimination prevalent in the host society.

Acculturative Pathways

This research analyzes how different characters of the novel navigate life in a foreign land and a hostile society using the four acculturation strategies such as assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. Employing John W. Berry's theory, it is examined how each character's choice of acculturative strategy is based on their personal circumstances, collective experiences, and socio-economic conditions. These acculturative strategies depict the broader themes, i.e., cultural hybridity, longing for home, intergenerational trauma, and discrimination, prevalent in the novel.

In the novel, many characters leave their native culture and heritage behind to assimilate into the host society. This can be seen in the characters belonging to the second and third generations. Following the Japanese annexation of Korea, Isak and Sunja come to Japan and live in a cross-cultural environment. While being

continuously in contact with Japanese society they face unjustified hatred and otherness from them. This constant connection changes immigrant practices and results in the formation of new identities.

Noa, Sunja's son belonging to the third generation, is the prime example of assimilation. Throughout his life, Noa has leaned towards the host culture. He wants to be a Japanese person and prefers not to socialize with other Koreans. After Isak's arrest, Sunja makes kimchi at home and sells it at the train station to support her family. However, he dislikes the smell because his classmates would call him "garlic turd" (Lee 183) or associate him with other Korean children if he smells of kimchi. He shows no interest in playing with kids in the neighborhood and spends his time studying. He stays exceptionally clean, unlike other immigrants living in Ikaino.

Noa works diligently to gain his teachers' respect and subvert their belief that all Koreans are scammers and that he should be a specimen of excellent behavior to compensate for the wrongdoings of other Koreans. He wants to be deemed a good Korean, at least, if not Japanese, and seeks validation from others. Alongside his academic excellence, he cleans the classroom to be considered a good student who could improve the image of Koreans in Japan.

When Isak returns home and Noa goes to bring his mother from the shop, they pass a school that has just dismissed its students. "Noa looked down, but didn't let go of his mother's hand" (Lee 200). This statement from the novel reveals that he is ashamed of his ethnic background and wishes to conceal it. Another aspect of his character is that he always uses his Japanese name and never reveals his background unless someone already knows it. While continuously negating his background, he is aware of Japanese people's privilege in every field of life. "He believed that he could enjoy going to school if he were a regular person and not a Korean" (Lee 214). This shows that he equates happiness with being Japanese.

While staying on the farm, Noa is fluent in Japanese but knows little of the Korean language. This depicts his alienation from his roots and native language. He has consistently desired to get a job in a Japanese firm and thinks of the pachinko business as a filthy thing, which is often linked with Koreans in Japan. "Like most Japanese, Noa thought pachinko parlors were not respectable" (Lee 315). Later in his life, he has no desire to be linked with any Korean person. However, it is subtly implied from the start, as when Yangjin comes to Japan and bawls while hugging

her grandsons Noa and Mozasu, he "looked embarrassed" (232). This demonstrates his discomfort when interacting with entities connected to his origins.

Noa, alongside his cultural identity, has had no interest in politics or patriotism. He always avoids Koreans in Waseda "because they seemed too political" (305). Later in his life, when he finds out that his biological father is a Yakuza, he leaves his family and starts anew elsewhere, adopting a Japanese identity with a Japanese wife and children. His alienation from his blood family is pivotal for his new identity as it serves as the only means to escape his troubled past and cultural roots. It eventually leads to his suicide when his mother visits his office while she is dressed in traditional Korean clothing. The result of his struggles to assimilate into society is his broken identity, as he ends his life due to the pressure of an unwelcoming society.

Assimilation is forced by the colonizers in some scenarios. In the novel, Koreans have Japanese names, must speak Japanese to communicate with the larger whole, and pledge allegiance to the Emperor. Koh Hansu, from the second generation, assimilates into the core of Japanese society in his practical life. He knows the Japanese language, is married to a Japanese woman, and does his business in Japan. He has to suppress his Korean identity in public to be more influential to his clients. He wears Western suits like other men, such as Kim Changho, Yoseb, and Isak. When Sunja and Yoseb want to return to Korea after the war ends, Hansu prevents them and forces them to prioritize their future rather than some myth of rebuilding a nation. "Hansu would never allow his son to go to Pyongyang" (245) shows his discouragement of the decision.

In another acculturative strategy of separation, characters tend to maintain their original culture while actively ignoring the host culture. The first generation of immigrants exhibit this strategy, particularly Sunja's mother, Yangjin, and her boardinghouse members. They all speak Korean and are ignorant of Japan as a country. When Yangjin comes to Japan, she remains the same, and her dressing, language, and preferences do not change. In the household, the first and second generations prefer their own culture and traditions over the new ones. Her wearing a hanbok and being oblivious to Japanese traditions and language shows her separation from the host culture.

The second generation also exhibits a hint of separation strategy. Yoseb insists on going back to Korea after the war ends. He wants the kids to learn Korean so he can take them to Korea: “[...] boys had to go to a Korean school in the neighborhood because the family had to be ready to go back. The boys had to learn Korean” (259). His love for his native land is visible through his request to Kim to bury his ashes in his motherland. “If you wait till I die, then you can take my ashes and bury me there” (298) suggests a deep longing for home.

Sexton Hu also depicts separation from the Japanese traditions through his commitment to the Christian faith. In the mandatory Shinto shrine ceremony, he is seen “[...] mouthing the words of the Lord’s prayer [...]” (167). Upon inquiring about the truth, he says that the ceremony is actually idol worshipping and that he would no longer do it. This confession leads to the arrest of pastor Yoo, Isak, and Hu, and they all eventually die in confinement. This event illustrates how separation could lead to drastic outcomes and difficulty integrating into society. In the novel, Kyunghee knows Japanese, which allows her to adjust and communicate with others in difficult situations, unlike Sunja, who does not know Japanese. On one hand, separation helps individuals preserve their native culture and ethnic identity, but it also makes them more marginalized than the rest of the immigrant population.

Integration is the most applied strategy out of all, as it allows the individuals to take the acculturation process dually. Integration is possible when the host society is welcoming and allows the immigrants to integrate with them on a personal and public level. Mutual accommodation is required for integration to happen as it needs both dominant and non-dominant groups to adapt to each other. The non-dominant group has to adopt certain values and rules of the larger whole. In contrast, the dominant group must adapt its national institutions to accommodate the non-dominant group better (Berry et al. 355).

In *Pachinko*, integration is not wholly possible due to the hostile Japanese society, which does not welcome Korean immigrants, making it hard for them to merge into the host society. This can be seen in the individuals from the second, third, and fourth generations. Sunja, being from the second generation, has to deal with the Japanese people first. Though full integration is not possible, immigrants still try to adapt to the host culture, showing their resilience and strength in a resentful society. Sunja adheres to her native culture by dressing in Korean attire and selling Korean dishes to keep up with the economy of the new land. Although she does not know

Japanese, her strength lies in her willingness to support her family while managing both cultures. Her carts represent the blend of Korean tradition, i.e., Korean cuisine, with the practical demands of Japanese society, i.e., earning money.

In Yoseb's character, two strategies are exhibited. The initial strategy is integration, which evolves into separation later in the novel. He wears Western suits, speaks good Japanese, works as a foreman in a Japanese company, and prefers his family over the nation. Throughout his life, he has remained a practical person and thinks that there is no benefit in being a patriot if it would destroy one's family. "If the Korean nationalists couldn't get their country back, then let your kids learn Japanese and try to get ahead. Adapt" (192). He believes in making the best circumstances for himself to survive. However, later in his life, the separation strategy can be seen when he is bedridden and injured because of the bombings. He insists on returning home because there is nothing for them in this country.

Another main character who undergoes integration belongs to the third generation, i.e., Sunja's son Mozasu. Unlike his brother, he is not bothered by his ethnic background or cultural identity. He is proud of his mother and grandmother for supporting their family in hostile socio-economic conditions. He does not care what other Japanese think about him and is comfortable with his skin. When Hansu visits the farmhouse, he is significantly influenced by him and wishes to be as successful in his life, hinting at his integration into Japanese society. "I want to be rich, I want to have a big truck and a driver" (250) depicts his wish to merge into the system and make his way upwards.

While the Japanese do not offer proper integration to Koreans, Mozasu does not mind it. Instead of seeking validation from others, he carves his own space, creating a hybrid identity. Unlike Noa, he remains attached to his family and heritage. He is not ashamed of working at a pachinko parlor and owning several in the country. As a pachinko parlor owner, he integrates into the Japanese economy and provides for his family and Solomon's education. Although "Noa would not have wanted to work in a pachinko parlor" (315), Mozasu feels no shame in his job. Mozasu's girlfriend Yumi and his best friend Haruki, both being Japanese, showcase his integration. Integration is the most successful acculturation strategy because it leads to a happy life in a foreign land. By contrasting Noa's and Mozasu's lives, we can analyze the differences and outcomes of these strategies in the same environment.

Solomon, the fourth generation, integrates into Japanese society while being aware of his Korean roots. Despite being born in Japan, he must submit his identity papers for verification. “[...] they were going to get his alien registration card. [...] Every three years, Solomon would have to do this again unless he left Japan for good” (432). Koreans born after 1952 have to get this card, which makes him more aware of his ethnic background. He is well acquainted with his grandma, Sunja, and her mother, Yangjin, which makes it easier for him to remain close to his cultural identity. Like Mozasu, he feels no shame in his father’s pachinko business. So, when he gets fired, he decides to take over the family business. Mozasu and Solomon realize and accept their position in Japan as individuals who are not accepted entirely by Koreans or Japanese. This acceptance showcases their resilience and strength, which leads them to integrate into this society and have a bi-cultural identity.

Marginalization is often faced by characters in *Pachinko*, resulting in them feeling alienated and disillusioned with their own and host cultures. Noa, in his later life, feels no connection to either of the cultures and ends up taking his life. He has always wanted to assimilate but is rejected by the Japanese society. He feels shame regarding his blood. By calling himself cursed, he shows his disgust toward his biological father and his roots. “It would have been better if I were never born. How could you have ruined my life?” (345) reveals his discontent regarding his roots. A hint of marginalization can be seen in Solomon as he has to face certain issues regarding both cultures. Despite being born in Japan, he still feels alienated from Japanese society as he has to carry an alien registration card to verify his identity. On the other hand, he is acquainted with Sunja but does not know in detail the traditions and customs of ethnic Koreans, making him not an integral part of the community.

The constant systematic discrimination and prejudice could lead to one feeling alienated from both cultures. Koreans living in a separate area present the idea that the Japanese are not very welcoming. In Ikaino, ten to twelve persons must be accommodated in a single room. People have their animals with them in their houses, and the living conditions are absurd. Korean kids are not welcomed in schools, and no one wants to hire Koreans, making it difficult for them to assimilate and be a part of the society. If someone does, they are paid half of the price compared to the Japanese people.

These events highlight how marginalization is an easy choice for individuals as they are systematically pushed to select it. Firstly, society instills hate in individuals for their original culture and then refuses to give them space in the host one too, making them marginalized.

Stress Dynamics

Characters in *Pachinko* (2017) undergo acculturative stress across generations as a result of individual acculturation. Acculturative stress refers to the emotional, social, and psychological challenges immigrants face due to their failed attempts at adapting to a new culture (Berry et al. 362). Unrealistic expectations for behavioral changes and being unable to achieve them can lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. Cultural distance, racism, socioeconomic struggles, and difficulty in communication are the challenges that could result in stress.

The novel depicts many characters from different generations navigating through both cultures and struggling to construct their identity. The oppressive system makes it difficult for immigrants to adjust to a new environment, which leads to several psychological issues. Throughout the novel, Korean characters face discrimination and prejudice, contributing to the deterioration of their psychological and emotional well-being. When Sunja is going home from the market, she encounters some Japanese students who sexually harass her.

"We do not understand you, you smelly slut" (Lee 33) reflects the disgust embedded in their minds for Koreans. Later, they discriminate against her by criticizing their food, customs, and heritage. She is called a "stupid bitch" for not knowing their language as "All of the Emperor's loyal subjects are supposed to know how to speak Japanese!" (Lee 33-34). Sunja feels traumatized and distressed after the event and has difficulty going out on her own for an extended period.

Noa faces the same prejudice in his school. Although he tries his best to integrate into Japanese society, he is unable to carve his place in it. He leaves his family when he finds out that his biological father is a Yakuza. When Sunja goes to meet him, he fears that his ethnicity will be revealed, and the realization that he may not be accepted by society causes him acculturative stress. This event takes a psychological toll on him, and he is unable to deal with the challenges of fitting into the new society again, which leads to his suicide.

The issues of values and morality and living in an economically vulnerable society also contribute to acculturative stress. When Isak reaches Japan, he is appointed as a pastor in a church where young siblings are exposed to a new problem that is emotionally draining them. The elder sister works at a Japanese factory, and the manager takes her to dinner and showers her with gifts. The younger brother is concerned about the safety and morality of his sister. He wants her to quit the job saying, "I cannot control where she goes after work. If she keeps meeting with that goat, he will do something terrible, and no one will care what happens to her" (Lee 130). It shows his anxiety and concern for her safety.

The sister wants him to go to school and learn the Japanese language so they can get out of their miserable jobs. She continuously cries while thinking of the consequences if her brother quits the school, "[...] that's a foolish decision in the long run. Then we'll always be working these terrible jobs. Without knowing how to read and write Japanese" (129). She realizes how difficult it would be for them to adjust to society if they did not know the language, which adds to her acculturative stress.

Economic hardships can also lead to acculturative stress in many individuals. Their inability to move into the upper strata of society and deal with unemployment leaves them with psychological, social, and economic strain. These socioeconomic barriers result in feelings of inferiority complex, hopelessness, and despair. In the novel, Yoseb has to take a loan for Isak and Sunja's train fare, symbolizing his hardships and the economic conditions of Koreans in Japan. When individuals come seeking repayment, Sunja sells her watch, which in turn adds to Yoseb's emotional strain.

Firstly, Yoseb deals with the economic struggles by doing two jobs that hardly pay enough to feed his family. Then, the fact that Sunja has sold her belongings to free him of his loan challenges his male ego. "Stupid woman! Every time I walk down the street, how am I supposed to face these men again, knowing that some foolish woman paid my debts?" (156). This demonstrates that he feels challenged to navigate through life normally after knowing that a woman paid his loan.

Loss of homeland and cultural identity is a big cause of stress in immigrants. While they try to adjust to a new culture, the last bit of hope, i.e., their homeland and parents, is taken from them, adding to the existing challenge of living in a foreign land. When Hansu brings Sunja's mother to Japan, he breaks the news that the

government has killed all the Korean landowners to crush their hope of going back. Though he lies to them, the chances of Yoseb and Kyunghee's parents being alive are meager. This news takes a toll on already injured Yoseb, who "wept and covered his eyes" (245) as his last hope of going back to his parents is ruined. Now they are expected to do culture shedding, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to strategies like assimilation and integration, leading to overburdening pressure.

Stress can also result from worrying about your family being unable to adjust to society. Yoseb stresses that Isak should refrain from doing anything at church that would cause trouble for him or his family. However, the situation turns wrong, and Isak is arrested for something he did not do. This intensifies Yoseb's stress as he is left alone to take the economic control of the house along with psychological and emotional adversity. He feels guilty for calling his brother to Japan to be with him. This guilt and stress make him a completely different person, "[...] Isak's arrest had altered him considerably. Patches of gray smudged his once jet-black hair, and he suffered from intense stomach cramps. He stopped writing to his parents [...] put aside much of his food for Noa [...]" (173). This shows how Isak's inability to blend into society causes Yoseb a heightened stress level.

Sunja, on the other hand, deals with the feeling of uncertainty as she has to survive in the world without her husband. She plans to be financially independent to provide for her sons. "With tears streaming down her face, she told her brother-in-law that Isak would want her to earn money for the boy's schooling" (175). Alongside the duty of motherhood, she undertakes the stress of handling finances, which makes her emotionally vulnerable as she "tried not to cry" (176) while standing by the cart on her first day at the market.

Loss of social support while assimilating into the new culture causes acculturative stress. Humans are social animals, so they need each other to adapt better and deal with hardships. Koreans in the novel are in an entirely new land, and their sense of loss could result in low self-esteem and an inferiority complex. When Sunja comes to Japan, she faces a discriminatory society and misses her mother. This made it difficult for her to adapt to the new environment, so she took Kyunghee as her support. They become affectionate and she becomes a pillar for Sunja when she is working outside as she "[...] refused to let Sunja go to an unknown place by herself" (184) and is always ready to help her "[...] had been her plan to help Sunja with the negotiations [...]" (187), when they went to the restaurant for the job opportunity.

The third and fourth generations of immigrants are denied Japanese citizenship even after being born and raised in Japan. Their Korean ethnicity makes it difficult for them to deal with the challenges related to both cultures. After being born and raised in Japan, Noa is not considered a Japanese, leading him to disguise himself as a Japanese and continue his life with a Japanese wife and children. Solomon must also go to the registrar's office to get him stamped at fourteen and carry that card. The fact that the country he and his father are born into refuses to accept them, coupled with prejudice and workplace discrimination, leaves him with distress and anxiety regarding his sense of identity and belonging.

According to John W. Berry's model, characters are inclined to adjust better when the acculturative process starts from an early age (366). In contrast, old-age people like Sunja's mother tend to have more problems adapting to the new culture. She remains indifferent to the Japanese culture and finds it challenging to learn the language. On the other hand, Noa fully understands the new culture's language, manners, and values as "He spoke and wrote better Japanese than most native children" (195). Yangjin feels more drawn and connected to her original culture than the foreign one. Instead of getting more accustomed to the new environment, she feels tired and becomes more irritable and resistant to the change. "Lately, Yangjin felt tired and impatient; small things bothered her. Aging was supposed to make you more patient, but in her case, she felt angrier. Sometimes, when a customer complained about the small size of the portions, she wanted to tell him off" (263), which depicts how she felt frustrated by the need for integration and the economic burdens.

Acculturative stress is heavily influenced by the strategies, individuals use to incorporate into the new culture. How they choose to adapt directly corresponds to their stress level (Berry et al. 367-368). Assimilation is the only strategy in which individuals try to wholly blend in with the new culture, leading towards positive adaptation. The stress level is moderate because although the individual struggles to adapt to the new culture, this could save them from discrimination. They still feel conflicted about their identity and ethnicity. Noa chooses assimilation to steer through life, but his internal ordeal causes stress to overtake him, ultimately leading him to take his life.

Separation involves the highest stress level, causing the individuals to face various psychological, emotional, and economic challenges in their everyday lives. It leads

to a sense of otherness, which triggers anxiety and depression. In the novel, Yangjin struggles to learn the Japanese language, which prevents her from helping her daughter in the market. This stress elevated her grumpiness, which made it impossible for her to merge into the new society. On the contrary, integration is the most successful acculturation mechanism, so the stress is the least among all these strategies. Even though the characters are not able to fully embrace it because of the inhospitable society, they still attempt to integrate themselves into the society as much as they can. Mozasu, belonging to the third generation, adopts Japan's language and societal customs but takes no shame in his Korean background, which keeps him stress-free throughout much of his life.

Marginalization is the most exhausting way of leading life in a cross-cultural society. The characters feel no sense of belonging to either culture and navigate their life freely without connecting to their ethnicity. At a certain point, Noa begins to feel excluded; he does not feel accepted by Japanese society yet also does not want to belong to the Korean community, resulting in devastating consequences.

Acculturative stress can be managed at an individual level. Some characters are more adept at handling stress than others. Hansu is a businessman who uses his power and authority to deal with difficulties. In contrast, Yoseb deals with stress in a completely different way. He smokes and occasionally shouts at women for doing something awful. Overall, *Pachinko* is a powerful tale of multiple generations dealing with the hazards of living in a new place.

Conclusion

This research has explored the novel *Pachinko* (2017) in light of John W. Berry's Acculturation Theory. This study has shed light on how the characters maneuver through the complexities of life, demonstrating various acculturation strategies, which profoundly impact their identity formation, resilience, and the experience of acculturative stress. Through a nuanced analysis, this research has underscored how multiple generations of Zainichi Koreans construct a new sense of self through assimilation and integration. This research has also highlighted how characters demonstrate defiance of cultural incorporation using strategies of separation and marginalization. An in-depth analysis of the novel has examined how displacement causes immigrants an elevated level of strain and the manifold factors that cause this acculturative stress.

Set against the backdrop of World War II and the Japanese colonization of Korea, *Pachinko* is a tale of a multigenerational family leading their lives in a foreign land while facing problems related to race and identity in the transnational space. Yangjin is the first character among her contemporaries in the novel who comes to Japan and is exposed to a new culture. Her daughter, Sunja, the protagonist of the novel, has an extramarital pregnancy with a wealthy Japanese businessman. Later, she marries an ailing minister who is traveling to Japan and moves in with her brother-in-law and his spouse. Henceforth, the third and fourth generation of immigrants draw their first breath in the new country, leading to issues of identity and cultural subjugation in their subsequent years.

It explores the acculturation strategies exhibited by the novel's characters. This study has scrutinized all four acculturation strategies, i.e. assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Characters from the first and second generations adopt separation and assimilation as a way to move through life. Noa (second generation) has embodied assimilation, blending into the mainstream culture by rejecting his native culture. His deep-seated shame about his origin becomes the reason for his suicide. Yangjin and Yoseb, on the other hand, exhibit separation by retaining their original culture and resisting Japanese cultural integration. Yangjin never adopts the norms of the new culture and remains indifferent to the language and customs of the Japanese people. At the same time, Yoseb insists on returning to Korea, portraying his detachment from the host land.

The characters of the third and fourth generations, Mozasu and Solomon, represent the integration strategy. Even though complete integration cannot be achieved due to the systemic discrimination towards Koreans, Mozasu still embraces aspects of Japanese society. He also thrives in the pachinko industry even though it is looked down upon by Japanese society. Solomon also tries to integrate into society but faces workplace prejudice which redirects him toward his father's pachinko business, connecting him with his Korean roots. Marginalization has been evident in Noa's tragic arc as he has neither been entirely accepted by Japanese society nor has found solace in his Korean heritage. His cultural alienation from both sides led to his demise.

The researcher has scrutinized how displacement results in acculturative stress and the elements that affect it. This study has highlighted the psychological and emotional turmoil immigrants face across generations. Systemic discrimination,

economic hardships, loss of homeland, and issues of morality and values have contributed to the anxiety of Zainichi Koreans. Sunja and Yoseb have dealt with economic instability, while Noa has struggled with his sense of identity, increasing their strain. Solomon has faced prejudiced treatment at work, which exacerbates his strain and disillusionment with Japanese society. It has also investigated how the methods characters use to navigate their lives impact acculturative stress. Assimilation typically results in a moderate degree of stress. Marginalization and separation lead to significant distress while integration experiences the least.

This research has integrated psychological theory with literary analysis to analyze the lived experiences of immigrants in Pachinko. The findings have indicated that acculturation is a complex phenomenon shaped by historical, social, and personal factors. Some characters tend to adapt better, while others face cultural alienation and psychological distress. It has also demonstrated that acculturation strategies are fluid, with characters adopting multiple approaches throughout their lives. Noa exhibits assimilation throughout his life, but his tragic ending showcases his inclination toward marginalization.

This study has also shown that acculturative stress arises from experiencing social and cultural exclusion from the host Japanese society. Economic hardships, racial discrimination, and social exclusion are the factors that impact acculturative stress. The choice of acculturation strategy directly affects the level of stress in immigrants. Separation and marginalization result in extreme distress, while integration is the least stressful one. Although integration causes the least psychological strain, it is not always attainable due to the hostile foreign society, as in Pachinko.

Pachinko serves as a powerful literary monument that has highlighted the resilience of diasporic communities, portraying their struggles with identity and belonging. Future research can explore the intersection of gender, race, and economic mobility within acculturation frameworks.

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